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ABSTRACT

This document examines the restructuring of local schools and how restructuring can involve students with disabilities and the special education programs that serve them. The document is designed to create awareness of the issues related to restructuring and programs for students with disabilities and puts forth options for reconsidering and restructuring special education programs. The issues and the options are summarized within five critical areas: (1) develop a clear vision and mission for education that includes all students; (2) establish a system of accountability for all educational programs; (3) create an organization that supports the mission of restructuring; (4) change what schools teach and how they teach it; and (5) create supports for staff development and staff renewal. The options for developing a clear vision include establishment of a unified system, inclusive or heterogeneous schools, or a separate program identity with a continuum of placements. Establishing a system of accountability involves the option of developing unified outcomes or differentiated outcomes. Two options for creating an organization that supports the restructuring mission include centralized administration of programs and services or school-based management of programs. Schools could change what they teach and how they teach it by offering a unified curriculum or by offering separate or alternative curricula. Staff development in a restructured workplace is recommended to support staff renewal. Each policy option is accompanied by specific policy strategies, examples, and implications for adoption. (JDD)

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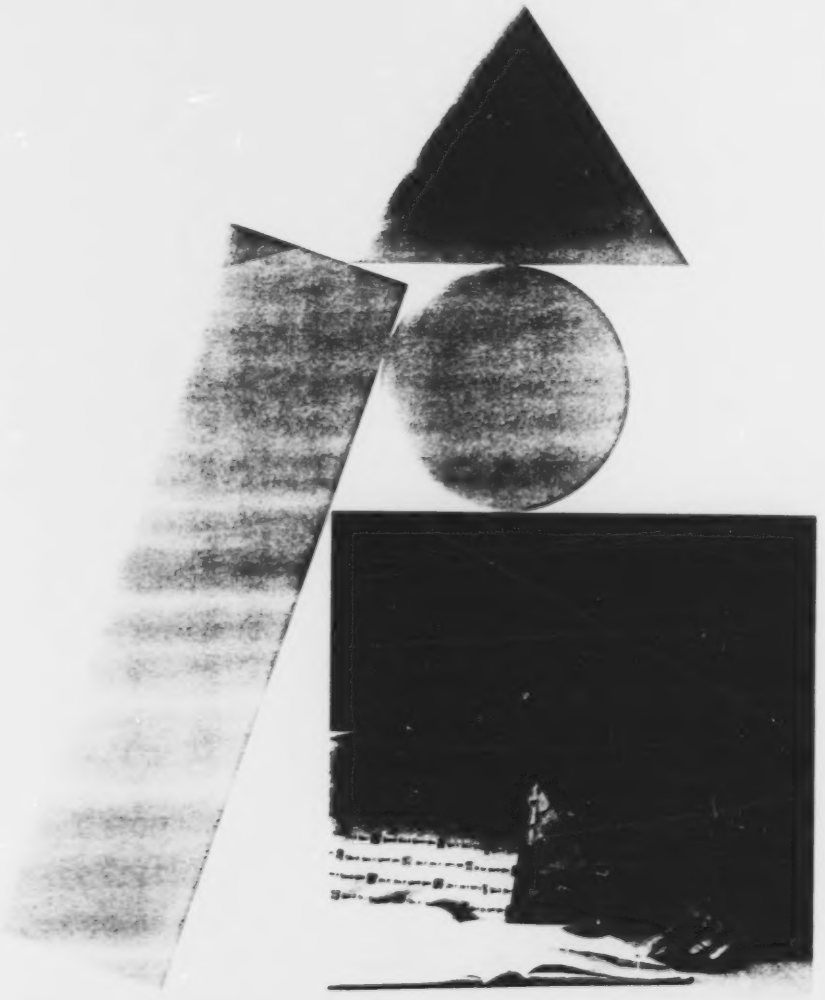
# ISSUES & OPTIONS

## In Restructuring Schools and Special Education Programs

*"This is the most comprehensive statement about restructuring special education that exists today."*

—SEA Associate Superintendent



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# ISSUES & OPTIONS

IN RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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SEPTEMBER 1992

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK

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The Center is based at the University of Maryland at College Park and is a collaborative effort with Westat, Inc. Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent the official agency positions of the U. S. Department of Education.

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# Preface

*The cost of our failure to educate all American children will be a steady erosion in the American standard of living...*
*Carnegie Forum on Education*

This document is about educating *all* children. It speaks to the restructuring of local schools and how that restructuring can involve students with disabilities and the special education programs that serve them.

This document was developed with input and advice from local superintendents and their associates and assistants who administer both regular and special education programs, from principals and their school-based, decision-making teams, and from national and state-level policymakers and administrators. The document has been designed to create awareness of the issues related to restructuring and programs for students with disabilities and puts forth options for reconsidering and restructuring special education programs.

The issues and the options are summarized within five critical areas of restructuring local schools:

1. Develop a clear vision and mission for education that includes all students;
2. Establish a system of accountability for all educational programs;
3. Create an organization that supports the mission of restructuring;
4. Change what schools teach and how they teach it; and
5. Create supports for staff development and staff renewal.

You may enter the document in any section. You may be interested only in the issues or you may wish to focus on specific options and the strategies for implementing them. You may also wish to look at the issues and options in one area. The sections can stand alone, but together they present a comprehensive overview of the position of special education within the context of school restructuring.

**Who Might Use this Document?**

**Boards of Education and Superintendents** - Part I provides an overview of often overlooked issues in educational restructuring. Part II can provide a vision for leadership in restructuring schools and special education.

**Local Administrators** - Part I will aid local administrators gain a better understanding of the dimensions of the issues schools confront and can stimulate problem identification in the schools. Part II can guide the strategic planning process activities of the central office.

**Principals and School-Based Decision-Making Teams** - Part I identifies specific issues that need to be addressed at the beginning of and throughout restructuring. It provides a framework for identifying local issues. Part II can guide decision making and strategic planning for restructuring to specifically include special education programs and services.

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# INTRODUCTION

**This document is the culmination of over a year's investigation of the issues related to the restructuring of our nation's schools and its effect on students with disabilities.**

The purpose of Part I is to create awareness and to stimulate thinking among educational administrators, key instructional leaders, and other policymakers regarding the issues for students with disabilities and the special education programs that serve them within the context of educational restructuring.

Part II begins with three visions for including special education in the restructuring of schools. It then offers major policy options for restructuring special education's (1) administration, (2) accountability, (3) curriculum; and (4) staff development. Each policy option is accompanied by specific policy strategies intended to aid policymakers in designing policies and programs and is presented with examples as well as implications for adoption.

## How Was This Document Developed?

In October 1990, the Center for Policy Options in Special Education, under contract to the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, began to identify the issues and policies that are emerging with respect to educational restructuring and students receiving special education support. The Center decided to limit exploration of the issues to restructuring the neighborhood school building and excluded from consideration issues related to schools of choice, restructuring state departments of education, statewide assessment mandates, and other state-level initiatives. Instead, the Center chose to examine what happens to students with disabilities when a school or a local district decides to restructure. Such efforts usually entail establishing a mission and goals for restructuring, defining student outcomes, and decentralizing authority.

The focus on the local school and district was intentional because the greatest variation in restructuring is occurring at this grass roots level. Admittedly, local districts cannot be completely decoupled from state-level actions nor can state-level activities be ignored. However, the Center chose to examine the implementation of restructuring policies at the local school site, which presents the greatest variation.

The Center began its work through a series of meetings and informal discussions with a number of leaders in educational restructuring as well as the teachers, parents, and administrators who are currently involved with restructuring. Following these conversations, Center staff identified a number of school districts across the U.S. that were recommended as leading the way in restructuring in either regular or special education. Staff investigated 34 districts, visiting 15 to interview individuals involved in restructuring. In addition, Center staff sponsored several meetings to discuss preliminary issues and to identify promising practices and policies. This activity was designed to elicit input from a broad and diverse group of individuals engaged in restructuring and to describe critical issues for integrating children with disabilities into a restructuring school. From these meetings and discussions emerged the policy options. Together, the two parts of this document can help guide the decision making for special and regular educators as they move toward restructuring schools and school systems.

## What is the Background of Restructuring?

During the past decade, American education has been caught up in the momentum for change. Beginning with the first alarms regarding the poor state of our country's educational system, states and local districts have initiated a number of policies and programs intended to improve education. Early reforms addressed raising standards for graduation, teacher certification, and overall student achievement. More recent attention has focused on adapting the very structure of education to meet changing values. This "wave" of educational reform, which has been termed "restructuring," embraced a number of concepts that include a major commitment to educate all students regardless of economic, ethnic, or cultural differences and a commitment to improve the performance of all students in measurable ways.

Today, at the beginning of a new decade, education has moved into national focus. With educational systems in flux, the common denominator is change, as almost every district in the U.S. embarks on some type of restructuring.

Two major strands define the changes that are occurring. One strand is concerned with obtaining better student outcomes. These efforts are focused on performance accountability and are frequently defined by state-level performance assessment systems. The emphasis is on establishing specific standards for schools and formally measuring student performance. Another strand of restructuring is concerned with the context of teaching and learning. The focus is on redefining educational curricula and experiences in the school building to provide students with enriched instruction and varied opportunities for active learning, which are designed to result in higher student performance.

## What is Special Education Restructuring ?

Special education in the United States has a long history. Beginning in the early 19th century, special programs were developed for children with certain disabilities. Over the years, programs in local school districts grew, along with the knowledge of how to educate these students. For some students, most notably those with severe mental retardation, access to educational programs was slow in coming. Just 20 years ago, most of these students were not in public schools. A combination of advocacy and litigation brought major changes to the schools.

With the passage, in 1975, of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) (now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA), special education became institutionalized in the public schools. Over the years, students served under this Act increased from 4.8 percent of the resident population aged 3-21 in 1976-77 to 7.1 percent in 1990-91. The Act also brought about increased attention to parent involvement in educational planning and cooperation.

The 1975 legislation also dramatically expanded the infrastructure of special education bureaucracy. As programs and services became more available, special education at the state and district levels often evolved into a distinct service system within the education bureaucracy.

Special education policies have been successful in many ways. Today, education is provided to all students regardless of the severity of their disabilities. This has been a challenge; one that has been met with new, broadened definitions of schooling, specialized curricula, and new instructional approaches.

Despite the progress made in providing education to students with disabilities, special educators began to question the outcomes of their students and began to explore greater integration into regular education. The emphasis moved from pull-out programs to promoting collaboration and cooperative teaching among regular and special educators in the classroom. In addition, concerns increased over



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the large number of students classified as learning disabled.

Some who wanted to improve the quality and scope of the education of students with more severe disabilities called for more integration of these students into the everyday life of the classroom. The inclusion movement began with side-by-side classrooms and social integration and moved toward full inclusion of students with severe mental retardation and other severe and complex disabilities into classrooms with their same age peers.

During this same period, a number of researchers increasingly documented the poor post-school outcomes experienced by former special education students. Many of these students did not complete school, and follow-up studies indicated that many students with disabilities who exited school were unemployed or only marginally employed. They were dependent on family members, with little social or recreational activity. Concern over what was happening to these students after leaving school prompted many educators to reexamine the educational experiences of these students. The focus moved from procedures and process to creating better outcomes for students with disabilities.

New models were proposed for providing special education services in more collaborative ways with regular education. The discussions related to restructuring special education by promoting more integration within regular education schools and improving outcomes for students with disabilities occurred simultaneously with discussions about restructuring regular education. To some degree, the two movements are continuing in parallel fashion, while in some places the two strands are rapidly converging. The regular education community is setting the direction and defining the outcomes for the restructuring movement, but there is increasing attention to how special education and students with disabilities will be included and integrated within the larger system. Within this context, the Center for Policy Options in Special Education has taken a critical look at the issues and policy implications involving special education and students with disabilities within the context of school restructuring initiatives and has put forth some broad options for restructuring special education services.

## Who Is Receiving Special Education Services?

Over 4.8 million students received special education during the 1990-91 school year. While the vast majority of students receiving these support services is between the ages of 6 and 17, the number of younger students identified as needing special education is increasing rapidly. The majority of identified students is considered learning disabled, and most receive their special education services in the regular public school, although typically in resource rooms or segregated classes.

The term "students with disabilities," while it encompasses the traditional definitions found in Federal and state laws, does not exclude the possibility that the heterogeneous needs found in this group interface and overlap with the needs of "regular education" students and that the designation "disability" does not necessarily reside within the person but may describe an interactive process with the curriculum and school expectations. Therefore, it is important to recognize that students with disabilities have diverse educational needs requiring a range of specialized educational services. This diversity must be in the forefront of discussions about the role of students with disabilities in aspects of school restructuring, including outcome assessment, curricular reform, and changing instructional practice.

## What Is Regular Education?

Within this document we use the term "regular education" to mean all of the educational programs outside special education. This term stimulated much discussion and feedback from our numerous reviewers. All argued there was not a simple entity such as "regular" education. While we recognize that the students and programs within regular education are not homogeneous, we have used the term for simplicity. The educational system, of which special education is but one part, is best characterized by its diversity; it is neither regular nor general. Likewise, special education is equally diverse, representing a range of programs, services, and orientations. Therefore, it is our hope that information contained in this document concerning the policy issues involving students with disabilities will contribute to a broader understanding of student diversity and restructuring.

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# Part I: The Issues

## The Restructuring Process

Through discussions and interviews with individuals involved in school restructuring, five tasks emerged that must be addressed by schools wishing to restructure:

1. Develop a clear vision and mission for education that includes all students;
2. Establish a system of accountability for all educational programs;
3. Create an organization that supports the mission of restructuring;
4. Change what schools teach and how they teach it; and
5. Create supports for staff development and staff renewal.

These tasks became the framework for discussing the impacts of school restructuring on students with disabilities. The tasks are distinct, yet not separate. In most cases, one part of the process flows from another. Setting the mission and goals for restructuring defines the standards for which schools will be held accountable. Determining the governance structures determines who will be held accountable for which outcomes, as well as who will make decisions regarding how students will be educated. Curriculum and instruction - the content of education - become linked to outcomes. In fact, in an outcomes-driven system, there is a heightened awareness of curricular content. If you are going to measure it, you must teach it. Instruction supports the curriculum as well as the mission of education, particularly as it relates to increasing collaboration between regular and special education. Finally, staff development and renewal must be provided to sustain all aspects of restructuring. In each part of the process, students with disabilities must be recognized and accommodated.

## Considerations and Issues Related to the Major Tasks of Restructuring

Several considerations related to each task listed above have been identified. As each school team takes on the challenge of restructuring to meet the needs of all students, it will be faced with numerous options for completing each task. The considerations presented in the following pages are intended to help the team focus the task in directions that have proved helpful to others attempting restructuring.

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# ISSUE: DEVELOP A CLEAR VISION AND MISSION FOR EDUCATION THAT INCLUDES ALL STUDENTS

Restructuring begins with a vision from which is derived a mission statement—a statement of philosophy and purpose that reflects the school community's values and beliefs. The vision and mission statement must be broad enough so that all parts of the system and the community can enroll; all programs and individuals must see their place in the mission and say, "Here is what I can do." The mission statement is more than a statement of philosophy, yet it reflects the vision of the system. It sets the direction for the school. Special education, along with all other programs, needs to be reflected in the school's mission. Special education leadership should be involved in creating the vision and forming the mission that includes special education not as a separate entity but as an essential element. In order to do this, special educators must have a vision for how special education services can best be provided in the schools. The mission for special education needs to be defined not as a separate entity but as it supports district and school-wide restructuring. Words chosen to convey the mission statement must be carefully selected to reflect the diversity of the students and the programs that serve them. The system should be challenged by the mission statement. When special educators are explicitly included in the process - at the state, district, or school levels - there is greater collaboration and mutual trust through all the other stages of restructuring.

It does seem to make a difference if students with disabilities are explicitly recognized in the goal statements and other district plans. All of the rest of restructuring - outcomes, curriculum decisions, instructional arrangements - will better reflect the diversity of schools and result in unambiguous policies.

**1** **The school community's values and beliefs concerning the education of all students within the school need to be reflected in the vision for the school and be part of the mission statement.**

- District and school visions and mission statements need to be developed with wide community participation and input (administrators, regular and special educators, support staff, students, parents, and business and other community members).
- District mission statements need to be examined within each school building to ensure that they truly meet the unique educational environment. If not, the statements may need to be revised to better reflect the educational needs of all students in the school district.

**2** **There is a need for goals that challenge the system and set new standards, while reflecting the outcomes desired for all students.**

- The goal-setting process should involve the active participation of all stakeholders, including parents, to foster a climate of trust and ensure that the opinions of all stakeholders do count.
- Goals can be too narrowly limited to performance criteria that cannot be attained by some students with disabilities who have limited or non-existent academic skills or for whom such skills are not feasible or relevant.

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- The goal-setting process can be used to encourage support and dialogue among the professionals in the system concerning the purposes of special education programs and services and how they support and supplement the system's mission.
- Staff can be encouraged and rewarded for visionary planning in education. Without visible support and modeling by system and school leadership, staff will be reluctant to take risks.

**3** **There is a need to build leadership and create a partnership for change among special education, regular education, and families.**

- If special education leadership is absent at the district- or building-level restructuring process, opportunities are lost to build on the strengths and human resources abundant in special education.
- Leadership for creating partnerships and fostering collaboration is strongest if it is modeled by central office staff.
- Someone has to ensure that students with disabilities are considered in the restructuring process. This is critical to ensuring that their special education needs are respected in the restructuring plans.

*"Whenever there is a discussion of our long-range plans for restructuring, I'm always on the outside with my nose pressed against the glass..."*

*A local director of special education*

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# ISSUE: ESTABLISH A SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The focus for educational restructuring is improved student learning, which frequently is translated into quantifiable measures for which school personnel must be accountable. If special education is not explicitly involved in the conceptualization of restructuring, it becomes very evident when accountability measures are defined. Increasingly, districts have found themselves dealing with competing priorities as they have established outcomes at the same time that statewide accountability systems are imposed. More often than not, the result is layers of assessments. Within districts, there is little consensus regarding which students with disabilities should be included in which assessments. There is no clear plan for determining which measures to use for students receiving different curricula. In addition, there is reluctance to use the same assessments with students with learning disabilities who may be participating in the regular curriculum. Students with disabilities tend to be unsystematically exempted from required assessments, or they are assessed but their scores are not reported. Decisions regarding inclusion or exemption of students from outcome assessments may be partially based on the perceived lack of appropriateness of these outcomes. Yet, the issue then becomes defining and assessing the separate outcomes. Currently, the lack of resolution of these issues means a lack of accountability for students with disabilities.

The key to restructuring special education rests with accountability. Knowing what the outcomes are for students with disabilities and who is responsible for those outcomes builds the trust among special educators, parents, and the regular education system.

**1** **There is a need to define student outcome assessment systems that reflect the diversity of all students and include all students. Exemption policies need to be developed for students who will not participate in the assessment process and, once established, should be uniformly applied and monitored.**

- Special educators feel most comfortable with student outcomes that are defined as domains or common areas of learning within which a broad range of student performance standards can be set. The domains must also reflect areas such as social development and personal growth and not just academic skills.
- When student outcomes are established in terms of performance standards on specific mandated tests, students with learning and behavioral disabilities are perceived to fare less well. They may be forced to take tests that are far above their performance level or may be exempted from testing by policy or through the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process. Although exemptions may be made out of consideration for students' perceived abilities, exemptions may exclude large numbers of students who are actually capable of successfully completing all or part of the assessments. The result is that no accountability measures are available.
- In districts where such tests are associated with some type of public report, referral rates to special education often increase as schools seek to "exempt" public low achievers from tests.
- Creating accountability for the outcomes of students receiving special education services can promote incentives for school-wide focus on the quality of instruction offered to those students.
- Rigid policies regarding participation of students with disabilities in school system accountability measures result in some students with disabilities being denied opportunities to participate in regular education.

**2** **At a minimum, alternative accountability measures may need to be provided within the outcome system for those students for whom other measures are not demonstrated to be useful.**

- Current accountability for special education programs relies on program data such as numbers of students served, type and nature of services provided, and in some districts, numbers of referrals. Evaluations of student performance often are only provided in the IEP but not aggregated to the school, district, or state level.
- Presently, there is no consensus regarding which accountability measures - either actual student performance or program data such as referral rates or measures of integration - should be established for students with disabilities.

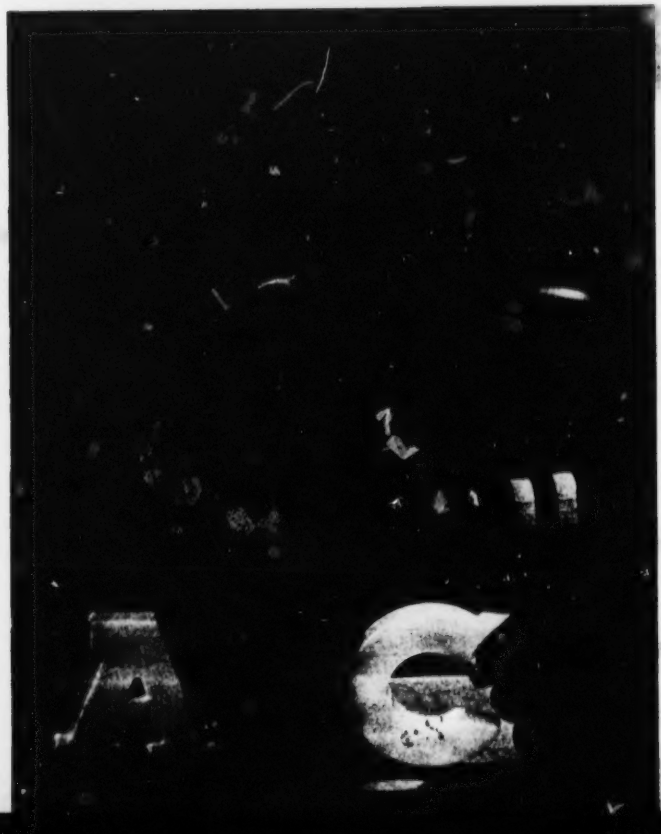
*"Accountability for student outcomes is the key to including kids with disabilities in the restructuring movement... they are the school's responsibility and their outcomes must be measured and reported."*

*Director of special education of a large urban school system*

- State and local districts may be reluctant to establish additional accountability measures for students with disabilities, such as post-school employment or community living, because schools perceive themselves as having little control over adult services or employment opportunities. However, if schools are held accountable for preparing students to take an active role in society, the same commitment must hold for students with disabilities.

**3 There is a need for more uniform policies and procedures for reporting existing outcome data for students with disabilities, as well as for determining the consequences of those reports.**

- Outcome data for students with disabilities frequently are not reported when obtained through testing programs. In some instances, schools may exempt from their "scores" data for students with disabilities because of adverse effects on overall reports of school performance.
- The use of authentic assessments (e.g., portfolios) as well as reporting progress versus mastery can result in students with disabilities enhancing school "scores" and can support integration of those students into the accountability system.
- Performance measures may need to be modified for use by students with disabilities. However, there is some resistance on the part of regular educators to making certain modifications (e.g., allowing untimed administration).
- As outcome data for students with disabilities are included in school-wide performance reports, some principals are reluctant to accept special education programs in their buildings because of concern over lower achievement levels and higher disciplinary occurrences, as well as higher absenteeism.







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# ISSUE: CREATE AN ORGANIZATION THAT SUPPORTS THE MISSION OF RESTRUCTURING

Decentralizing school management has emerged as the cornerstone of school restructuring. It is based on the premise that educational decisions are best made at the building level, that teachers, parents, and principals should be freed from outside interference to educate students according to their best judgment. School-based management (SBM) frequently accompanies a district's restructuring; sometimes it is the only initiative undertaken by a school district. Typically, individual schools receive some decision-making authority in three areas: budgets, personnel, and curriculum. Comprehensive school-based management is not possible unless the school is permitted to control budget, personnel, and curriculum.

Examples of decentralized authority range from moving all decision making to parents and community members to the more common form of establishing advisory councils composed of teachers and parents to assist in making school decisions, yet allowing the principal to retain primary authority for school management. Such decentralization may or may not be accompanied by reorganization of the central office administration.

Participation of special educators in the governance structure is highly dependent upon having leadership for special education at the local school site. Leadership can come from building principals, as well as from among instructional staff who can bring special education into the restructuring process. However, school staff need the flexibility to make decisions about special education, budgets, and programs, and need to know the parameters of the decisions they can make.

Regardless of whether special education becomes unified with regular education or remains a separate program, individual building principals need clear, unambiguous messages about the black and white areas of policy and procedures and the areas in which they have opportunities to be innovative.

*"If we don't give local schools authority to make decisions about kids in special education, those schools will never accept responsibility for those kids."*
*A local district superintendent*

**1** **There is a need to create long-range strategic plans that address how all parts of the system, including all special education programs and services, will be coordinated and directed at the school site.**

- Including special education in the planning for restructuring creates opportunities for sharing resources - personnel and knowledge - and for opening doors to more creative delivery of services to all students in the school.
- Strategic plans designed to guide restructuring need to explicitly address how various services and programs (such as special education) will support the school-wide goals.
- The strategic planning process can identify barriers to full implementation of a restructuring plan, including regulations or other policies, the institutional tradition or history of the program, and collective attitudes or beliefs about special education or students with disabilities.
- Collaboration among all relevant program heads is crucial throughout the strategic planning process. Without coordinated mission statements, strategic plans may result in competing approaches and competing resources.

**2** **School-based planning teams need to reflect the diversity of the school and community, including those parents and professionals who understand and can represent the needs of students with disabilities.**

- Schools that have leadership for special education can offer the best climate for promoting increased collaboration among all staff in the building. Such leadership can come from parents as well as professionals and must be welcomed by the whole school.
- Decision making of local school-based planning teams can be enhanced through an increased understanding of students with disabilities and the nature of special education. The central office needs to ensure that teams have that knowledge.

**3** **Policies regarding special education referral, identification, and placement and the relationship among regular education, special education, and families need to be clearly and consistently defined and communicated to all staff within each school building.**

- School-site instructional decision making is facilitated when the policies related to referral and identification, as well as the options for delivering instruction, are explicitly communicated to principals and their staff.
- Redefining the roles of central office personnel to technical assistance providers supports the decision-making process at the school level.

**4** **Decision-making authority for special education budgets, programs, and personnel needs to be clearly delineated.**

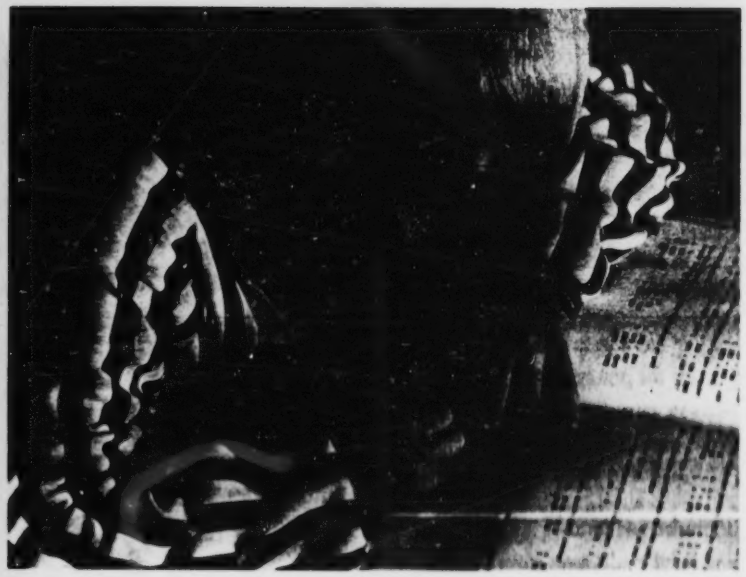
- If allocations and assignment of specialized personnel are determined at the central office, there is little if any discretion at the building level about the use of special education resources, thus there is little incentive or flexibility to encourage involvement of special education in school-wide restructuring.
- State regulations, such as those regarding class sizes and staffing ratios in special education, may interfere with the authority of schools to decide the number and types of personnel. School-based planning teams must be aware of such regulations and understand the procedures available to seek waivers from these regulations.

**5** **The negative effects of state special education funding formulae and local accounting practices on collaboration between special and regular educators must be considered.**

- If staff allocations are based on assumptions of certain ratios or placement locations (e.g., small, self-contained classrooms), fear of losing a teacher and associated resources may dictate how much collaboration a school district may support.
- Personnel assignments within the school may be restricted by source of salaries. Personnel paid entirely from Part B flow-through funds may not be able to work with non-special education students. Due to a limited supply of related service personnel, their assignments may remain under the direction of the central office with their time allocated to schools at central office discretion, making it difficult to include those specialists in the school restructuring process.
- District budgets are usually viewed in isolation. For example, special education programs lose transportation funds when students go to neighborhood schools instead of to centralized programs. Dollars that could be used to support development of the new neighborhood school program frequently cannot transfer.
- Because dollars for special education materials and equipment are usually allocated separately, their use can be restricted; this perpetuates the separateness of the education and accompanying programs for students with disabilities within the building.

**6** **When schools are given the sole responsibility for providing staff development (as well as goods and services) within their buildings, there is the need to ensure that all teachers have professional needs met, including special educators.**

- School-based staff development may be planned to reflect the needs of the majority of staff, but unless special education is reflected in the mission, some teachers may not receive the specialized training they need. Similarly, regular educators may not receive training necessary for teaching students with disabilities.



# ISSUE: CHANGE WHAT SCHOOLS TEACH AND HOW THEY TEACH IT

If the cornerstones of school site restructuring are student outcomes, then the foundation is a new view of how students are educated. The concept of restructuring rests on the need to challenge traditional approaches to education that view the student as a passive learner. In search of better student outcomes, schools are given increased authority over their own management and frequently decide what to teach. Still, most decisions regarding curriculum remain centralized. Local districts and some states are defining the core curriculum for the schools, but individual school innovations are increasing, as are innovations in the ways that teachers deliver the curriculum.

Many special educators have begun to question traditional, segregated approaches to educating students with disabilities. They are seeking collaboration with regular educators and greater integration of all students with disabilities into classrooms with their non-disabled peers. This movement toward integration has resulted in new instructional arrangements and has begun to point to the critical need for providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all students.

For many students with disabilities, the issue of what they are taught gets lost in decisions about where they are taught. Students with disabilities are entitled to have access to the district curriculum, but the curriculum cannot be so narrowly defined that it creates "casualties" who become the referrals to special education.

**1** **The adoption of school-wide approaches to curriculum and instruction needs to be considered in light of the impact on students who do not fit the standard academic approach. There needs to be flexibility to provide programs appropriate for each student; when flexibility does not exist, many students can be excluded from regular education.**

- Curriculum content is closely linked to defined student outcomes. When outcomes have been narrowly defined, the content of education becomes more narrowly focused and fewer alternatives exist that meet the diverse characteristics and needs of students with disabilities.
- The concept of having one curriculum for a district or state has implications for a number of students, including those with significant learning difficulties. If the curriculum is too narrowly defined, curricula may not be relevant or meaningful for some students (e.g., requirements that *everyone* take algebra). However, establishing alternative curricula can contribute to segregation and separation of students and staff.
- If there is "one" curriculum in a district, it is unclear how that curriculum will be delivered to students in separate schools, both public and private. Yet, if students do not receive instruction in this curriculum, they will have difficulty successfully reintegrating into the district's educational system.
- When schools emphasize only academic performance and higher level thinking skills, teachers become less tolerant of diverse learners; failures increase as well as referral rates to special education.
- When schools rigidly adopt one specific instructional approach (e.g., emerging literacy, cooperative learning, etc.), there is a risk that the approach will not be effective for all students. Without flexibility in such approaches, some students end up being removed from that instructional environment through referral to special education.

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- Lack of consistency across schools in applying specific instructional approaches may result in fragmented education for students who move from one school to another. This is viewed as particularly critical in urban areas and other large school districts that have high student mobility rates. Such fragmentation can also create a problem for reintegrating students with disabilities into their home schools or into regular classrooms.
- When special educators make unsystematic adaptations of district curricula for students receiving special education services, there is a risk of discontinuity across classrooms, and students can receive fragmented education.

**2 Special education programs and services need to be considered in light of how they relate to the core curriculum. Do they support access to the curriculum within mainstream settings for all students or do they offer separate curricula in isolated settings?**

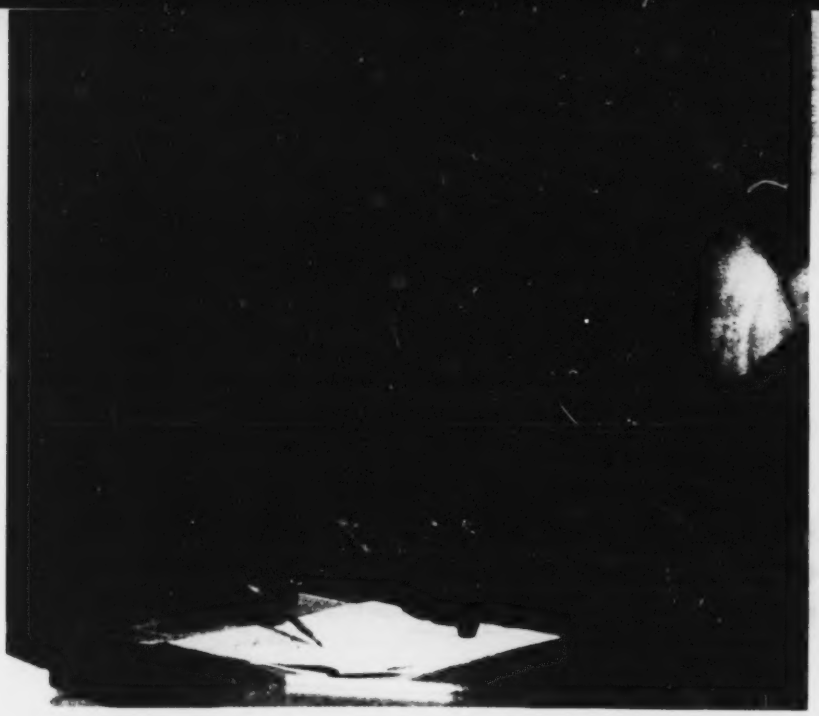
- Issues of placement are frequently confused with decisions regarding the content of instruction for students with disabilities. If some students with disabilities require a more functionally oriented curriculum (e.g., activities of daily living or community mobility), there is a tendency to offer the curriculum in a separate setting.
- Increased professional collaboration results when all students participate in the same curriculum.

**3 Professionals within the school building, as well as other community agencies, students, and families need to increase collaboration to create a broader view of education that can truly accommodate all students regardless of educational need.**

- Deep attitudinal and philosophical barriers exist between regular and special education and other disciplines. When true collaboration exists, educators, social workers, psychologists, medical professionals, and other related service personnel will confront how they view their roles with students requiring special education services and how and where their services should be delivered.
- Special educators can mistrust regular education and can be reluctant to relinquish control over the education of "their" students because they don't understand the demands and structure of regular education.
- Policies, including those related to certification, funding sources, and work schedules can impede increased professional collaboration within schools and across agencies.
- State regulations that dictate certification requirements or placements for students with specific disabilities inhibit creative use of staff and perpetuate isolation of students, staff, and curriculum at the building level.

***"There is a lack of understanding between special and regular educators - each doesn't know what the other is doing in the curriculum but what makes it worse is that they make the assumption that they do know!"***

*A building principal*





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# ISSUE: CREATE SUPPORTS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND STAFF RENEWAL

A critical area within restructuring is how to support the personnel who are confronted with massive changes associated with restructuring. Substantial changes in roles and relationships as well as curriculum place great demands on people. Teachers and administrators often express a sense of being overwhelmed and feeling frustrated at the sometimes slow process of change. Yet, they also express excitement at the prospect of doing things differently, being more creative, and moving in new directions. Thus, successful restructuring requires adequate support for teachers, key administrators, and in some instances parents and community members. Just as teachers and administrators require support in assuming new roles, so do parents and community members. Often, this means training in new areas such as negotiation, working as a member of a group, strategic planning, supporting change, and acquiring specific information related to instruction and curriculum. Such professional development can become particularly critical if special education is to be brought into the restructuring process.

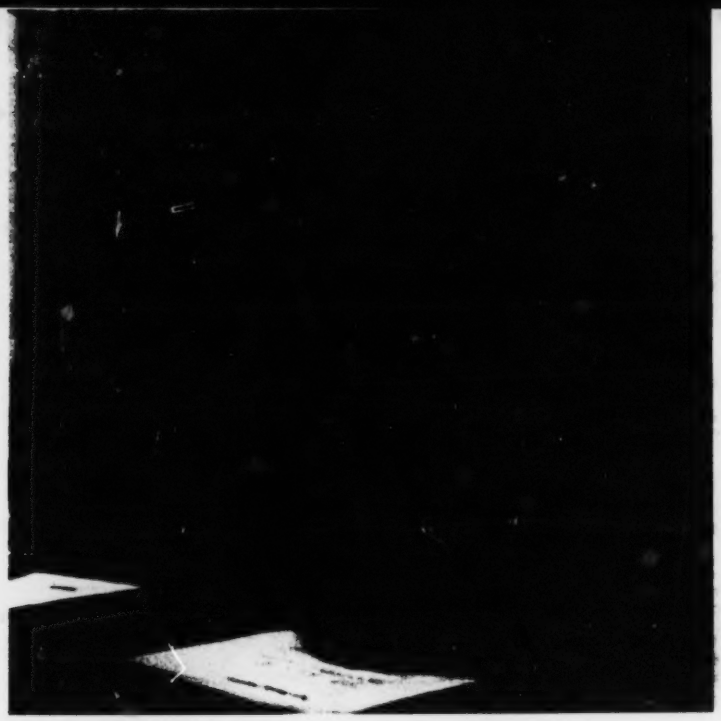
Professional development and staff renewal were often cited as the forgotten areas of restructuring. Teachers need time to discuss concerns and engage in joint planning; they also need more opportunities for staff development that have a consistent focus, occur in the school, and provide opportunities for practice.

**1** **A professional development plan that addresses the goals of restructuring needs to be conceptualized at the building level and coordinated across the district.**

- Comprehensive professional development requires a long-term investment in training. It requires developing skills and confidence for staff members to be willing to give up "turf" and enter into new ways of educating students.
- Comprehensive planning requires input from all instructional personnel in the building as well as parents and community members.
- Adequate time and other resources for staff and volunteer development are frequently not provided as part of a district-wide restructuring plan. This is often a forgotten area in the current fiscal environment.
- Little professional development, with respect to new responsibilities in educating students with disabilities, is provided to principals, school psychologists, and other specialists.
- School-based staff development is considered to be the most responsive to teachers' needs, but often, too few resources are available at the school level for such activities.
- Planning time and other opportunities for informal collegial support and assistance frequently do not exist within the school schedule, and resources are not directed toward increasing such opportunities. This diminishes collaboration among special and regular educators.
- Union contracts and other district policies can restrict time available for staff development and collaborative planning beyond district-wide staff development days.
- Paraprofessional participation in planning or staff development is rarely compensated, which hampers the team approach to instruction and further hampers increased instructional collaboration.

**2** **Regular educators, as well as parents and community members, require knowledge about students with disabilities and the types of programs and services they require just as special educators need to learn more about what is being taught in the regular classroom.**

- Little professional development is offered to district-level policymakers in areas related to education of students with disabilities.
- Special and regular educators frequently do not have preservice training that promotes collaboration, including how to work as a member of a team, or knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of one another's disciplines.



*"The key to the whole restructuring process is staff development - we need time and funds to do it!"*

*A state director of special education*

- Parents and community members involved in school-based decision making can benefit from training in teamwork and collective decision making. However, such training is rarely provided by the schools.

**3 Models for providing continuous and long-term staff renewal or retraining within a school district need to be widely implemented if the restructuring momentum is to be maintained.**

- Professional inservice tends to be episodic and delivered through occasional workshops without follow-up. Opportunities for applying knowledge and receiving corrective feedback are frequently not provided.
- Opportunities are frequently limited or non-existent for school staff to stay abreast of new developments in education, including demonstration programs or applied research findings.
- Resources that support individual development through workshops, conferences, or coursework at local colleges and universities are rarely sufficient to support the needs of professionals in the schools, yet schools and institutions of higher education need to actively pursue those partnerships.
- Staff development activities often are not evaluated to determine if they result in long-term change.



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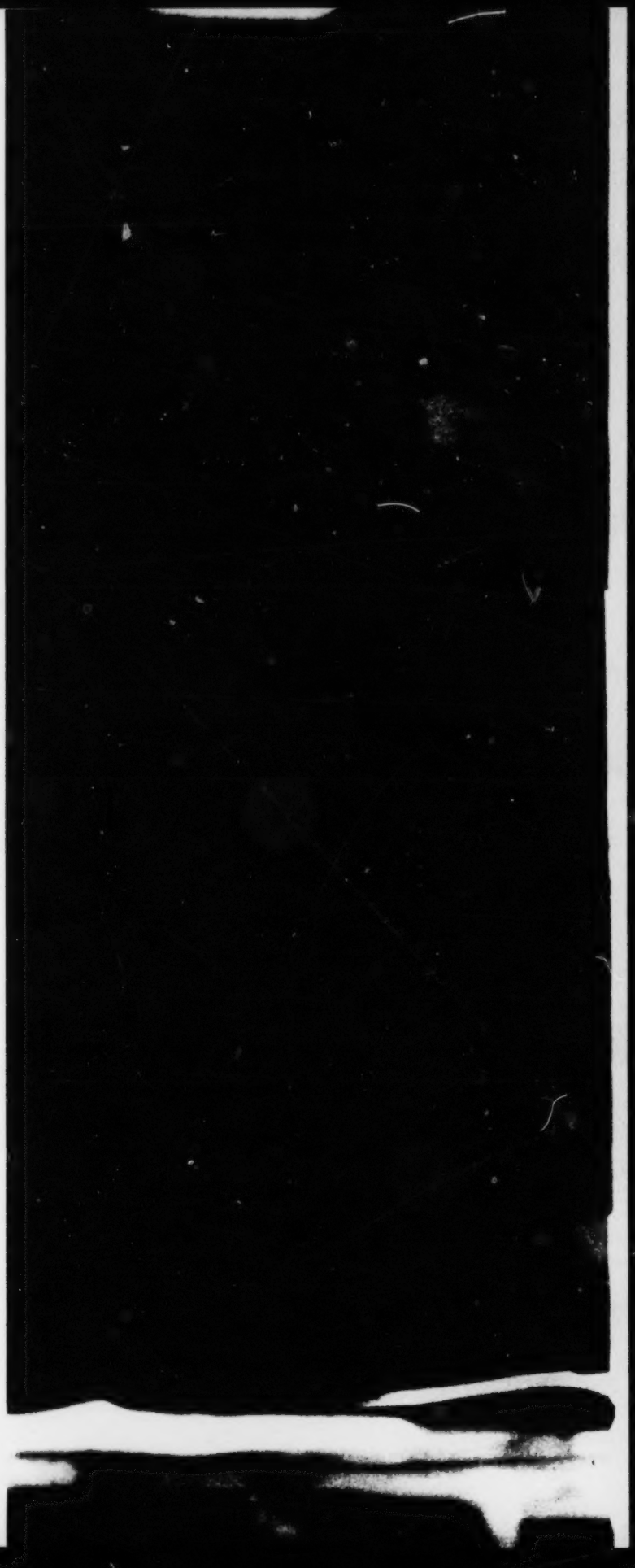



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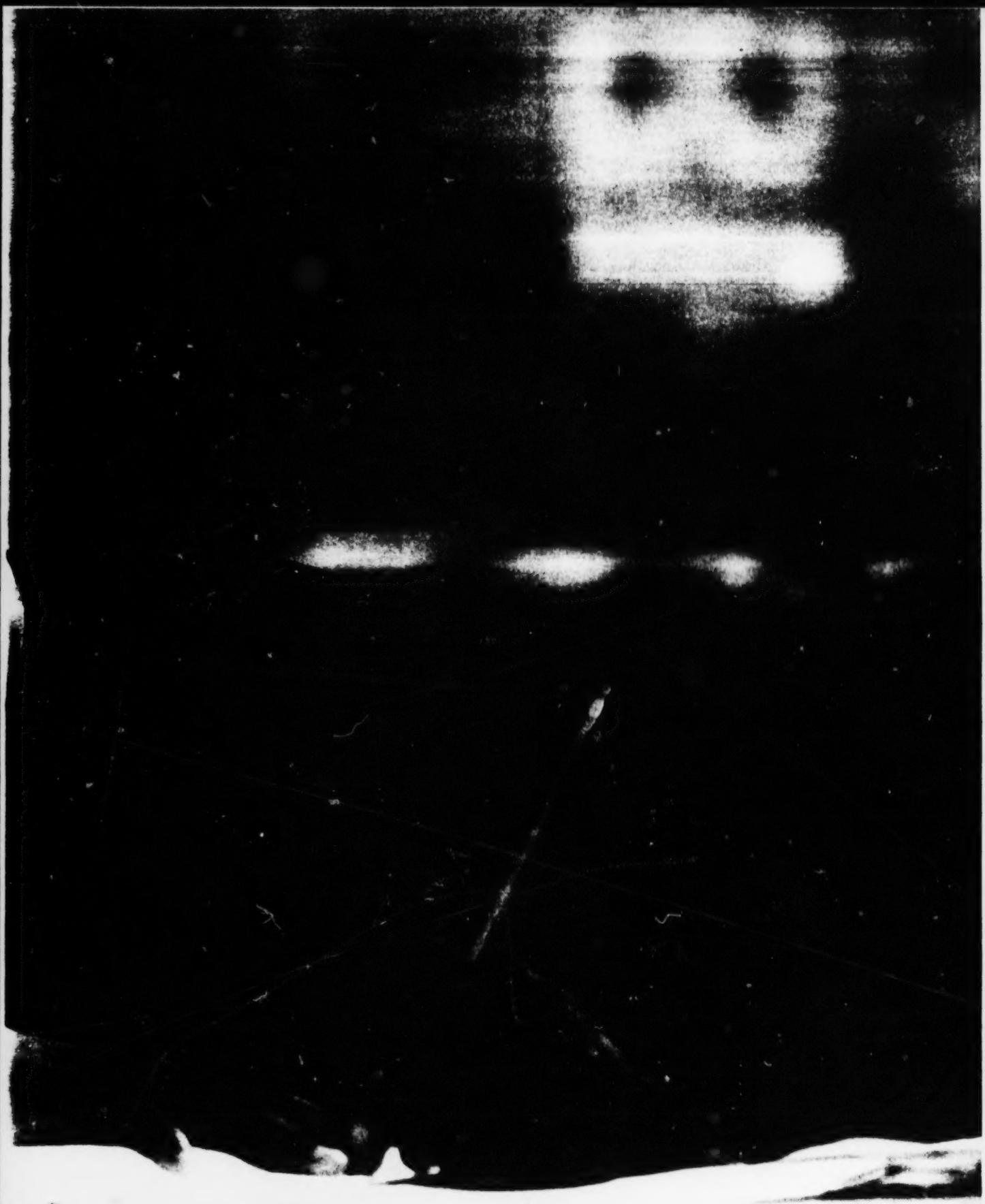
# Part II: The Policy Options

This section provides administrators and policymakers with policy alternatives that can guide the restructuring of special education. These options are organized into five major tasks, just as the issues in Part I were. Each option is presented with specific assumptions that define the option. Also presented are strategies that may have to be employed to implement the option as well as the possible implications of those strategies. The latter are more illustrative than definitive - what one school may need to do can be very different from a school in another state or district. Similarly, not all options are assumed to be within the control of local schools. Some options may be subject to approval or support of state government and, in a very few instances, may digress from current special education policies. The options section is followed by brief descriptions of the options in practice.

Obviously, there are numerous ways to restructure special education programs and services within a school and few options are mutually exclusive. Some options are clearly linked - selecting a specific vision for education can lead to specific choices regarding student outcomes and curriculum. There may also be any number of possibilities for combining the options; nonetheless, the options that have been developed and presented in this section represent broad orientations to restructuring, not specific policy.

The options reflect the thoughts of the individuals who have participated in the dialogues surrounding educational restructuring. More than 30 individuals assisted in constructing specific options or provided extensive commentary. Many others reviewed and critiqued the draft. The options are presented to promote reflection and consideration as well as dialogue among all those who are committed to educational restructuring at the individual school or district levels and to providing high-quality education to students with disabilities. The options can help guide the restructuring process as it occurs in schools and hopefully will result in more thoughtful and responsible educational policy.

In defining the options, there were three overriding assumptions: policy and program changes in education will be built upon the fundamental rights of students with disabilities to a free and appropriate education designed to meet their individual educational needs; changes to current policies should be controlled changes that offer an opportunity for alternative policy instruments to be tested before widescale adoption; and decision making regarding changes must involve broad community input and reflect the values of the school community.



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# DEVELOP A CLEAR VISION AND MISSION FOR EDUCATION THAT INCLUDES ALL STUDENTS

The central task of educational restructuring is defining a vision for education from which a mission can be developed. A mission statement is critical as it defines the direction for change: the goals for restructuring; the anticipated outcomes and curriculum; and the governance structures.

Mission statements provide an orientation to restructuring. The mission statement and goals can emanate from the state, the local district, or be crafted by the local schools. The statement and the accompanying goals define an orientation to education. Yet, without a clear vision of what education can be, a mission statement cannot be developed. That vision must be broad enough to include *all* students and must reflect the values of the community served by the schools. In order to define a vision and mission that acknowledges all students, state and district policymakers and local building teams need to be aware of different visions for providing special education to students with disabilities. These professionals, as well as parents and community members, must understand the possibilities for changing their schools in ways that serve all students well.

**Options:**

- **Unified system;**
- **Inclusive or heterogeneous schools; and**
- **Separate program identity with a continuum of placements.**

Each is presented as a separate option or orientation; yet, as noted earlier, there are many combinations of the three options.

Key Questions:

1. Is there a vision for how the schools should be restructured and does that vision reflect broad community values?
2. Will the mission be defined through a process that will include broad representation of parents, teachers, and community members, including other child service agencies?
3. Is there receptivity and openness to considering options for changing the way special education programs and services are organized?
4. Is there administrative support for exploring more flexible procedures and programs in special education?
5. Will the mission statement and goals be broad enough to truly include all students or will some students be excluded by virtue of policy or practice emanating from the mission? Are the goals focused on academic excellence, or is there emphasis on personal autonomy, independence, and social responsibility?

# Option: Unified System

The purpose of this option is to create an educational system that can respond more effectively to the diverse needs of students and their families. A unified educational system is based on the principle that each student represents a unique combination of abilities and educational needs and may require individual assistance at varying times during the school years in order to achieve important outcomes.

The key belief is that schools are organized around services, not programs. In a unified educational system, human and other resources are employed to provide a range of services in a range of settings to students with unequal educational needs. "Full-service" or "community schools" can be created to bring together multiple service agencies, such as health and mental health, social services, and, when necessary, juvenile justice to meet the needs of *all* students. Central to this option is assurance that there is accountability for all students, including those with disabilities, and assurance that students with disabilities are being appropriately and effectively educated. A unified system requires flexibility in program implementation and funding. This option represents a major change in the way special education currently operates; supporting parallel program bureaucracies to provide separate specialized services is viewed as inefficient and duplicative. Furthermore, the costs associated with determining individual program eligibility and enforcing program rules is viewed as draining critical resources away from providing direct services to students.

The assumptions associated with this option will likely require bold policy initiatives and some adjustments at the state and Federal levels, but some school districts have begun to experiment with a unified structure within existing policy frameworks. The result is a system that can use every available resource to provide quality education to all students, regardless of their educational needs.

## Assumptions

The school system wants to provide equal access to high-quality instruction that results in desired outcomes for all students, regardless of their characteristics or educational needs.

Accountability for *all* students is vested in their neighborhood school, and there is one set of outcomes for all students.

Decision making and responsibility for students' programs are shared among school and other specialized staff, students, and parents.

Generally, all students are educated in their neighborhood schools and fully included in the curricular and extra-curricular life of the school, including being educated in age-appropriate regular education classrooms. However, some specialized placements could be made available on a limited-time basis to *any* student who needed intensive services.

Most specialized instruction and services are provided without the need to label or otherwise categorize students. A small number of intensive or highly specialized services might be provided on a short-term basis outside the neighborhood school, and would be available to any student.

Services are provided without labels and use resources from all categorical programs, as well as other sources.

## Strategies

**Mission Statements:**

Create district- and building-level mission statements that match the realities of each school and match the student characteristics within the building. Mission statements and goals apply to all students.

Create the mission statement and organize directives that emphasize how services will be provided to students and not reference specific programs or administrative structures.

**Funding:**

Centralize categorical program accounts (e.g., Chapter I, Special Education, Educational Impact Aid, ESOL, Migrant Education, etc.) on a single computerized system to allow the central office to administer funds to ensure fiscal compliance but allow flexible use of funds at the building level in order to foster collaboration and joint planning.

Base funding on the total school population or on services provided, not on the numbers or types of students identified as having disabilities within a school. Federal and state funds can be distributed to local districts and school buildings using a per capita formula based on the total number of students in the state.

Create funding flexibility *within* special education; use funds from other programs that currently require differential diagnosis or eligibility determination.

Use special education and other "program" funds to support professional development for teachers, administrators, and other professionals to improve their ability to serve students with diverse needs.

**Eligibility Decisions:**

Offer support services as needed in the classroom without determining students' eligibility.

View referrals as requests for services, not requests for evaluation for program eligibility. Treat a parental request for service as a referral to service. Parents should review student evaluations and student assessments regularly to determine student progress.

## Strategies (cont.)

Have problem-solving teams provide students and teachers with a range of informal assistance and intervention strategies. These teams can determine when more specialized intervention is required.

Use specific skill assessments, observations, interviews, and checklists to determine educational needs and the effect of the instructional environment on student performance. Assessments should not result in labeling or categorizing; psycho-educational batteries will generally not be used.

**Programs and Services:**

Offer short-term interventions or services without requiring IEPs, regardless of who requests or receives services. Comprehensive or long-term, multi-disciplinary or multi-agency services can require IEPs, but these are not necessarily connected to special education. A student's home school implements and evaluates services.

Share personnel and resources at the building level. Special educators become providers and managers of services available to any student requiring assistance. "Special education" should be a service, not a place.

Promote collaboration across disciplines, agencies, and programs within the school system to provide multi-disciplinary/multi-agency services at the school site.

**Procedural Safeguards:**

Determine who is protected under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act without restricting the provisions of educational services. An IEP, required for the assurance of an appropriate education, should be based on the attainment of outcomes, not on services received.

**Outcomes and Accountability:**

Base accountability for all students on one set of outcomes that is meaningful and attainable by all.

Measure all students' outcomes in ways that permit variation in the ways a student demonstrates mastery.

Include measurable evaluations of student performance as part of the services provided. Schools are accountable for demonstrating the effectiveness of their services. The district and/or state may establish additional student performance outcomes for accountability purposes.

Use other student performance outcomes, as established by the school, local district, and/or state for accountability purposes.

**Governance/Program Administration:**

Recognize that special education is no longer a separate program administration. Central office administration should be determined by role, not according to "program" identity.

Have special education administrators collaborate with the school site staff to plan how specialized services can be provided in regular schools and classrooms.

Develop plans for collaborative service delivery with all members of the education bureaucracy, including teachers' unions.

Have central office special education personnel provide generic instructional support and technical assistance to schools. These staff can also monitor funds, as well as outcomes and specialized placements or contracted services.

**Personnel:**

Have all teachers and other school staff, including paraprofessionals and specialists, become deliverers of instruction to various groups of students.

Designate building administrators as the primary instructional leaders for all students. Special education staff and administrators should become integration facilitators and offer support within the building.

Have specialty personnel, including special education teachers and speech and language clinicians, expand their roles to team teachers, curricular adapters, and consultants to teachers.

Have a teacher, supervisor, or district-level service coordinator be responsible for ensuring that IEP goals are met.

Provide ongoing, comprehensive staff development based on common goals, to regular and special educators within the school building. Focus on the changing roles and responsibilities of school-based personnel.

## Implications

Requires a change in belief on the part of special educators regarding the purpose of special education and of their respective roles and responsibilities to the students with disabilities.

Requires significant changes or waivers in Federal/state policy program eligibility requirements and/or identification procedures, funding formulae, and designation of "qualified personnel" personnel.

Unless formulae are revised or waived, funds for special education will be lost as a result of the decrease of special education child counts due to non-identification.

Funding from other sources, such as Medicaid, that require a differential diagnosis may be lost unless alternative procedures for determining eligibility are used.

Requires an accountability system, based on individual or group student performance outcomes, that can be used to assure student educational needs are met.

The concept of procedural safeguards as enumerated in the IDEA may need to be reconsidered in terms of determining eligibility for those safeguards.

Requires commitment from parents, advocates, and special education professionals and assumes that those individuals can be assured that the educational needs of students with disabilities are being met and students are making adequate progress toward goals.

Requires a commitment to maintain current programs at the school site. Unification cannot be a reason for reducing program budgets.

Requires a range of placements. Some students, notably those with the most challenging behaviors, may require some specialized placements. These students must be protected from exclusion from school through disciplinary procedures.

There are concerns that students with less "visible" disabilities (such as learning disabilities) will not receive the specialized services professionals believe those students require because services will be spread across too many students.

# Option: Inclusive or Heterogeneous Schools

Inclusive education represents the philosophy that all students, regardless of the challenges presented by their educational needs, should be educated with their same age peers in their neighborhood schools. While a unified system includes some aspects of inclusive schools, the inclusive or heterogeneous option does not require or assume a blending of programs. This option can exist within a separate categorical special education program administration. Inclusive schools are based on the belief that those students with the most intensive educational needs should be educated in their neighborhood schools and within regular classrooms in those schools. The specialized services that are designed to meet students' diverse educational needs are coordinated within the neighborhood school and, to the extent possible, within the regular classroom.

The option does not necessarily require a major reconceptualization of special education as a program; special education programs and services can be administered centrally and funded with minor changes. The option does require a commitment on the part of superintendents and principals of local schools to accept responsibility for educating *all* students in their home schools, and to redefine the roles of instructional personnel in the school building so that they work together more collaboratively.

## Assumptions

All students are educated in their neighborhood school in age-appropriate regular education classrooms and community sites shared by *all* students.

Socialization among *all* peers is as important as specific skill attainment.

Specialized supports and services are provided within regular education classes and other integrated environments.

Special education eligibility requirements and procedures are maintained.

Decision making and responsibility for students' programs are shared among school staff, students, and families.

## Strategies

**Mission Statement:**

Create district- and building-level mission statements that explicitly note inclusion and place accountability for students with disabilities at the neighborhood school.

**Funding:**

Base state funding formulae on services (type and intensity) provided, not numbers of students "identified" as having a disability and requiring special education.

Incorporate all special education funds, including those for transportation, into the school budget to provide incentives for maintaining students in the classroom and to build the initial capacity of the school staff.

Address state funding formulae barriers to using a regular teacher as the primary instructor of a student with disabilities by co-funding teaching positions (using regular and special education funds) and/or designating a special education teacher or administrator to implement the IEP.

**Eligibility Decisions:**

Maintain special education program eligibility requirements and procedures; assessments should be tied to educational diagnosis, rather than to determining categories or labels. Since specialized services will be available to more students in the classroom, some short-term, less intensive services can be delivered by special educators without eligibility determination.

**Programs and Services:**

Develop IEPs for all *identified* students. Other students within the regular classroom receiving short-term special education services do not require an IEP.

Use special education services within the regular classroom to benefit a wider range of students, while directly focusing on identified students with disabilities.

## Strategies (cont.)

Provide most special education services through collaboration between regular and special educators and other specialists. Special educators may reduce their direct service role and coordinate services provided to students with disabilities within a regular classroom.

Use peer support networks and peer tutoring to aid students with disabilities in the regular classroom.

Have individualized special education services determined on a school-by-school basis by parents and staff. They should be guided by district goals, student outcomes, and an accountability framework. Focus on fitting the program to the student and the school; allow variation in services but not standards.

**Procedural Safeguards:**

Hold individual schools accountable for student outcomes, as well as for ensuring that students identified as eligible for special education receive services specified in IEPs. Central office staff monitor these safeguards.

Advise each school which procedures must be adhered to and how compliance will be monitored by district-level staff.

**Outcomes and Accountability:**

Identify student outcomes on the IEP, including individualized goals and objectives and performance outcomes as specified by the state or school district.

Align IEP goals and objectives for each student with district outcomes to effectively integrate student outcomes and accountability into the school.

Consider social relationships and increased social competence as valued outcomes for students with disabilities.



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**Governance/Program Administration:**

Recognize that building-level administrators are responsible for and serve as the instructional leaders for all students in the school.

Have central office special education staff maintain a separate program administration. These individuals should provide assistance to schools, monitor procedural safeguards, determine budget allocations to schools, broker services, and provide an administrative level of complaint resolution and mediation at the building level. Placement and eligibility decisions are made at the school level.

**Personnel:**

Have special education teachers shift from providing direct instruction to supporting regular teachers, team teaching, and helping with curriculum analyses and modification, peer facilitation, and related functions.

Have specialists (speech and language specialists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists) deliver services in the regular classroom either directly to or in consultation with regular education personnel.

Provide intensive school-level staff development to all faculty and specialists to facilitate the transition to a more collaborative system.

Inform a staff person in each building about special education administrative tasks and procedures to ensure consistency in applying procedural standards.

## Implications

Requires considerable time and flexibility in the teaching schedules to facilitate planning and communication. *This is essential to making the process work.*

Requires belief and support of building administrators.

May move schools toward a more unified and collaborative system.

More inclusion resulting in more special and regular education collaboration in the classroom may result in lower referral and identification rates for special education, and with the current funding formulae, could reduce funding.

Personnel allocation and funding formulae based on teacher/student ratios may need to be revised or waived because students are not served in small segregated classes.

Costs may initially increase to support staff development as well as other service changes; however, schools report a decrease in service costs over time.

Speech and language specialists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists must assume new ways of delivering services in regular classrooms and functioning as consultants to teachers.

Some parents, advocates, and professionals may resist change unless they are assured that students' educational needs will be effectively met in the regular classroom.

## Option: Separate Program Identity with a Continuum of Placements

This option maintains a range of separate and specialized educational services and settings, including separate classrooms and schools, to accommodate the range of individual and unique needs of students with disabilities. The belief is that some students with disabilities require a different curriculum and intensive instructional supports that cannot be provided within a regular comprehensive school building. This option maintains individualized educational programs and related services for students identified as having disabilities and provides those services within a continuum of specialized placements. This option assumes that special education will maintain a separate identity, including separate staff within central administration who oversee and manage the specialized placements and procedures, as well as separate staffs at the local school sites.

The categorical programs with a continuum of placements represent a traditional model for providing special education services. It is a model that was instituted to provide a range of individualized programs within an educational system that had largely been unresponsive to the needs of students with disabilities.

The concept of maintaining separate placements for some students, such as those who are deaf and those with serious behavior disorders, is viewed by some as still necessary for an appropriate education. While those placements can exist within a system that is moving toward more unification, some within special education believe that the strength of the current system rests with its strong identity and single focus in students with disabilities.

## Assumptions

Some students with disabilities require an intense service or program in a special classroom, separate school, or other specialized setting.

Meeting the needs of students with disabilities requires a high degree of specialized knowledge in curriculum and instruction, as well as a specialized cadre of personnel supervised by a highly focused administration.

Existing special education eligibility requirements and procedures serve a major purpose in ensuring that students with disabilities receive an appropriate education.

Special educators and related service personnel are accountable for students' programs and have primary responsibility for ensuring that IEPs are met.

The educational focus for students with disabilities is on providing highly individualized instruction and specific skill attainment, including vocational competence.

## Strategies

**Mission Statement:**

Create district- and building-level mission statements that acknowledge the diversity of students within the school and promote consideration of students with disabilities in all aspects of the school.

**Funding:**

Use current Federal and state funding formulae to support categorical special placements.

**Eligibility Decisions:**

Use current Federal and state definitions and guidelines to determine program eligibility.

Identify students with disabilities through comprehensive educational and psychological assessments; develop individualized programs and services from these assessments.

## Strategies (cont.)

**Programs and Services:**

Maintain current procedures and policies regarding IEP development.

Maintain alternatives to the regular classroom such as resource rooms, special classrooms, and alternative schools. Provide segregated intensive services with the intent of moving students back into regular classrooms as soon as possible.

Use instructional assessments to determine the level and setting of specialized educational interventions. Use specialized placements when professionals consider general instruction inappropriate even after adjustments to performance standards, pacing, instructional methods, and content have been made and specialized support has been provided.

**Procedural Safeguards:**

Maintain current procedural safeguards; central office staff administers procedures, provides a grievance process, and monitors and mediates complaints.

Have central office staff enforce and monitor protection for children identified as disabled and requiring special education.

**Outcomes and Accountability:**

Have special educators maintain accountability for all students receiving education; accountability should be based on student performance outcomes as well as procedural compliance.

Use separate performance indicators for students receiving alternative specialized curricula which will be incorporated into the IEP.

Develop, with building-level input, alternative assessments and reporting formats that demonstrate the progress of students with disabilities and provide incentives for schools to improve student progress.

**Governance/Program Administration:**

Have central office special education administration define program standards and the range of services, permitting some variation on a school-by-school basis.

Have central office special education administration control the budget and the allocation of special education and related services personnel and determine student placements outside of their neighborhood schools.

**Personnel:**

Maintain separate qualifications for special educators and other specialists and define their roles differently.

Have central office personnel supervise special education instructional staff and provide separate staff development based on different program goals.

## Implications

This option requires no policy or program changes except perhaps defining educational outcomes and monitoring those outcomes.

Through careful oversight and program monitoring this option protects students' educational rights. This is considered necessary, in the absence of meaningful student outcomes, to ensure that students with disabilities receive appropriate services.

The option can perpetuate a dual or separate system that conflicts with site-based decision making and school autonomy and works against site-based management and the concept of promoting responsibility and accountability for special education students at the school site.

The segregation of students with disabilities occurs as dictated by service needs. However, such segregation can continue into adulthood and allow communities to remain uninformed and uncomfortable with persons with disabilities.

This option is meeting increased resistance among some parents, advocates, and professionals.

A strong centralized focus of responsibility and advocacy for special education programs is maintained. Some special educators believe some students (e.g., those with behavior disorders) are less accepted by schools and that this option provides the intensive services such students require and shields them from an unaccepting regular classroom.

Dual "systems" are maintained that can result in less efficient communication and conflicts across program administrations, as well as duplication of services and funds.

Segregation of students with disabilities from their same age "typical" peers can result in a lack of appropriate social relationships.

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# ESTABLISH A SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The cornerstone of restructuring the school is a set of student outcomes for which schools can be held accountable. The goal of restructuring is to improve education in specific measurable ways. All other tasks of restructuring are crucial elements, but they are only means to the end. The end should be better outcomes for *all* students.

Options:

- **Unified outcomes and accountability; and**
- **Differentiated outcomes and accountability.**

The concepts of outcome assessment and accountability are separate. Decisions regarding which student outcomes are important to which students are first steps in restructuring schools to accommodate students with disabilities. A system can adopt certain outcomes for *all* students, but can also develop differentiated outcomes for students in different curricular options or at different ages or grade levels. Of equal importance to outcomes is determining who shall be accountable for the outcomes of special education students. The evolution of special education as a separate program within a school system has created a "your student/our student" mindset within local schools. Special education officials are frequently viewed as the responsible and accountable persons for students in their programs, however, the move is toward establishing accountability at each local school that serves students with disabilities.

Key Questions:

1. Are there current district and/or state policies in place regarding assessment and school accountability that need to be considered?
2. What are the desired outcomes of education for all children? Are there additional or different outcomes for some students with disabilities? Do the outcomes differ by age or by level or by type of disability? Can these outcomes and their indicators be assessed?
3. Who should be accountable for the outcomes for students with disabilities who are receiving special education?

## Option: Unified Outcomes and Accountability

This option establishes a uniform set of educational outcomes and a mechanism for measuring and reporting performance for *all* students on those outcomes. A unified set of outcomes is consistent with the concepts and beliefs of a unified system of education and a unified curriculum. Implicit in this option is the belief that there is a common domain of student outcomes that *all* students should be expected to achieve. Yet, the option recognizes that performance outcomes or indicators, as well as assessment strategies, need to reflect the diversity of the educational goals of students who receive special education services. These include outcomes such as personal autonomy or independence, which can be operationalized into more specific and measurable attainments during school.

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## Assumptions

There is one set of educational outcomes to which *all* students are entitled and which *all* students can attain.

Outcomes are valued and accepted as legitimate by *all* educators as well as the community.

Multiple performance measures of the educational outcomes can capture the learning of all students.

## Strategies

Identify outcomes that reflect the goals of education for *all* students and are broad enough to include *all* students. If outcomes are too narrowly defined or too rigorous, some students with disabilities may fail, leading to lower overall attendance and lower graduation rates.

Define measurable indicators of outcomes that are broader than content covered in specific coursework or otherwise driven by subject matter in order to ensure inclusion of all students.

Define multiple ways to assess each of the outcomes in order to include students with various learning levels and styles.

Identify instruments/procedures appropriate for assessing outcomes for all students (or modify existing measurement instruments). Authentic assessments (e.g., portfolios and performance demonstrations) can include a greater diversity of students.

Establish accountability for student progress, not absolute standards of performance. No school should be penalized for students with lower baseline achievement; penalties only exist for no student progress.

Determine how information will be used for accountability purposes. (e.g., will results for students with disabilities be reported separately or as part of school or district results; will results be adjusted for disability so schools are not penalized for including these students in "performance" reports).

Provide technical assistance to schools and support incentives to develop methods to improve the performance of students with disabilities.

Determine the relationship between established outcomes and IEP goals and objectives (e.g., will the outcomes translate to the IEP or remain separate?).

## Implications

There is a risk that the educational goals and needs of students with disabilities, particularly those with moderate or severe disabilities, may go unnoticed or not be reflected in the outcomes.

Principals/school staff can be held more accountable for outcomes of special education students and thus accept more responsibility for their programs.

This option can facilitate more accurate cross-school and cross-programs comparison.

Assessment measures can provide ways to ensure that all students are progressing and gaining a common core of knowledge.

Outcomes can drive curriculum and result in a more unified district curriculum which, in turn, results in greater opportunities to maintain students with disabilities within heterogeneous classrooms.

## Option: Differentiated Outcomes and Accountability

This option is based on the belief that outcomes for students with disabilities should reflect the individual and diverse educational needs of those students. It assumes that the content of educational programs designed for many of these students qualitatively differs from that of students in other programs and thus requires a different set of outcomes. Further, the various outcome measures may be used differently for program accountability - perhaps through the IEP or other reports. Different outcomes may be established for all students with disabilities receiving some type of specialized service within or outside regular education. Alternatively, different outcomes may be established for students with specific disabilities who may be receiving a specialized curriculum or services outside the regular school.

## Assumptions

Some students with disabilities may have unique educational needs that require a separate set of outcomes and performance measures that can be used for accountability purposes, and it is educationally acceptable for those students to have different outcomes.

Outcomes for some students with disabilities will be differentiated at certain points in the curriculum or at certain age or grade levels.

Individual schools are accountable for *all* students, regardless of outcomes.

## Strategies

Identify *groups* of students for whom current outcome assessments and accountability are not appropriate.

Determine outcomes appropriate for each group of students and define indicators and measures.

Identify or develop assessment tools that have been validated for specific student groups.

Determine how such separate outcome indicators will be used. Can they be aggregated at the school or district levels and thus be useful for program accountability?

Identify which "regular education" student outcomes (e.g., student participation, high school completion, etc.) are appropriate for specific student groups.

Modify existing assessments to enable students with disabilities to participate in "regular education" assessments, but maintain the validity of the assessments.

Include parents in determining differential outcomes for students with disabilities. The outcomes must be more than individual IEP objectives if they are to be meaningful for program accountability, yet they must reflect individual goals.

Different student performance outcomes can be developed for students with disabilities at the high school or secondary levels and can be unified at the elementary levels.

## Implications

This option can provide highly specific/focused outcomes that link to specific instructional programs and reflect the specialized skills and behaviors taught to students with disabilities. However, this can result in further separation of those students from the regular curricula and requires acceptance by parents and professionals.

Modification of the IEP may be required to incorporate the broader program outcomes.

The comparison of outcomes between regular and special education may be impossible because of diversity in goals, evaluations, and modifications.

The differentiation of student outcomes may result in differentiated or modified curricula and instruction which may, in turn, lead to separate "tracks" of students in separate classes for students with disabilities.

The lack of a common set of accountability measures can promote the notion that students receiving special education are someone else's responsibility.

This option can lead to increased referral and identification if regular education views the alternative outcomes as less stringent than the existing regular education outcomes and accountability measures, thus providing a safety valve for students who are failing in the regular system.

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# CREATE AN ORGANIZATION THAT SUPPORTS THE MISSION OF RESTRUCTURING

Educational restructuring frequently involves a change in governance structures, specifically moving resources and decisions from the central office to the individual schools. The concept of site-based management (SBM) is integral to the concept of promoting local control and innovation and increasing involvement of parents and other community members. The decision to move to a site-based, decision-making model can occur without involvement of special education. Within this area, we identify two options: maintain centralized decision making and budget control for all special education programs; decentralize authority and resources. These are far from pure distinctions. In fact, with respect to special education services, the majority of districts represent a hybrid of the two options, moving along the continuum of more to less decentralization. Current Federal and state procedures and policies require that certain standards be maintained across schools. Nonetheless, some districts have moved farther toward permitting local schools to make most of the critical decisions regarding how students with disabilities will be served.

Separate and specialized program administrations do exist, and the decision to maintain centralized special education administration can co-exist with an otherwise decentralized district.

Options:

- **Centralized administration of programs and services for students with disabilities; and**
- **School-based management of programs for students with disabilities.**

Key Questions:

1. Which decisions regarding services to students with disabilities can be made by individual schools and which must have central office coordination?
2. Will *all* students be included, or will program governance be decentralized for only certain students (e.g., those with mild disabilities)?
3. Is there sufficient support available to individual school staffs to allow them to begin to make program and budget decisions regarding students with disabilities?

## Option: Centralized Administration of Programs and Services for Students with Disabilities

This option maintains a central locus of decision making for special education programs, including budgets, hiring and allocation of special education and other related services personnel, and curriculum development and modification. The option promotes the concept of special education as a highly specialized program within education and is designed to concentrate expertise and program advocacy in a cadre of central office personnel. Centralization can support consistency across a school district in implementation of procedures, such as the identification of students and development of IEPs. Centralization can also promote consistency in instructional arrangements and settings across schools.

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## Assumptions

Special education decision making requires specialized knowledge and a degree of uniformity that are only available through a highly specialized group of professionals at the central office.

The need for accountability regarding the rights to education of students with disabilities requires a centralized quality control mechanism.

## Strategies

**Funding:**

Determine budgets at the central office; individual schools are given staff allocations and other resources, based on students served in the building.

**Eligibility Decisions:**

Make eligibility decisions regarding special education services (referral, multi-disciplinary assessment, and identification), as well as develop IEPs at the building level, according to procedures developed and monitored by the central office and set forth in state regulation.

Establish centrally the system-wide criteria and procedures for identifying students with disabilities and developing IEPs.

**Programs and Services:**

Have the central office define the range of programs and services. Specific placement options and instructional settings are defined and applied with relative consistency across school sites.

Make programmatic decisions and specify services on the IEP at the school level, with input and approval of the central office staff.

Recognize that central office authority regarding the placement or location of services may vary by type of student or intensity of service. Students with mild disabilities may be served in their home schools in instructional arrangements (e.g., co-teaching or collaborative team models) developed by schools. Central office staff make all placement decisions for students with more intense educational needs who are "clustered" in separate classes or placed outside their home schools.

**Procedural Safeguards:**

Have central office staff serve as compliance officers to implement procedural safeguards at the school level.

Apply district procedures for ensuring procedural safeguards consistently across schools.

**Outcomes and Accountability:**

Continue to hold central office staff accountable for the quality of special education programs and services specified in individual student IEPs. Special education program administrators define the outcomes for students with disabilities who receive special education services and also assume responsibility for assisting schools that are not meeting the program objectives. Problem identification and program changes are determined by central office administration.

## Strategies (cont.)

Central office special education staff determine outcomes and define curricula. Individual modifications/adaptations are made by special education teachers as necessary.

**Governance/Program Administration:**

Clearly delineate the parameters of decision making for central office versus individual schools regarding students with disabilities; consistency across schools is expected.

Clarify the roles of central office versus building staff with respect to delivering services to students with disabilities. Central office administrators define how related services are provided and by whom; they also assume the role of supervisor/monitor over school-based special education instructional staff.

**Personnel:**

Determine allocations of personnel to schools, supervise personnel, and organize staff development from the central office.

## Implications

Centralized authority and consistency are maintained regarding budgets, curriculum, instructional arrangements, outcomes, and personnel assignments. Such consistency may be more critical within districts experiencing high mobility of students across schools. Little or no change is required in the way most districts administer programs.

This option perpetuates a lack of ownership for special education students at the local school building. Accountability for implementation of individual programs, as well as outcomes for students with disabilities, is often deferred to special education administrators. This lack of ownership can promote inconsistent adherence to procedural safeguards and inflexibility in programming. Building-level administrators and instructional support teams are not motivated to accept responsibility for special education students.

Regular education teachers can continue to perceive special education as a program and not as a component of their classroom. Quality control and consistency in implementing program procedures should be maintained through central office monitoring and program supervision. However, consistency in rule application does not mean consistency in implementation.

Centralized administration maintains a locus for program advocacy and a focus for program change. It controls system-wide changes in procedure or programs.

This option can eliminate confusion over who makes decisions, but could result in conflicts between central office and schools attempting to implement site-based management.

Expertise to make decisions may be more readily available at central office and not diluted within a broader program administration.

Cross-comparisons of schools within a district are easier because special education programs are similar throughout the district.

# Option: School-Based Management of Programs for Students with Disabilities

This option is consistent with the tenets of site-based management and program decision making in that the locus of decision making regarding services for students with disabilities is moved to the local building. The option assumes that individual schools are the site of accountability for *all* students and that decisions regarding how programs are designed and how resources are allocated are best made by individual school staffs and the community served by the school. An underlying concept is flexibility. Building principals and teachers will be freed to make decisions regarding how to serve *all* students in their building. This option requires that special education administrators relinquish a degree of control over programs and accept variation in the ways students with disabilities are served. It also requires that regular educators accept responsibilities for students receiving special education. In order to ensure that accountability, there need to be clearly defined outcomes for students with disabilities that can be reliably assessed.

Current Federal and state regulations require some level of centralized program oversight. Special education is required to respond to a number of procedural mandates, and regardless of a school district's commitment to site-based management, this will require some consistency in program implementation across schools. In particular, if a district opts to maintain separate specialized placements for some special education students, then some centralized program administration is necessary to allocate and manage those services, as well as the itinerant and other specialists shared across the district.

## Assumptions

Individual school staffs are in the best position to define curriculum and instruction for *all* students.

Allowing individual schools to have authority for budget, personnel, and program decisions for all students with disabilities promotes inclusion of those students into the local school site and fosters responsibility and accountability for students with disabilities.

## Strategies

**Funding:**

Provide local school sites with budget allocations based on funding formulae that make accommodations for students requiring more intense services.

Allow local schools flexibility to purchase certain human and other resources from outside the school to meet the specific needs of students. Centralize and integrate, on a single computerized system, all categorical funding accounting systems to facilitate collaborative planning.

Use basic or general education funds to facilitate the start-up of innovative programs; seek waivers for continuance of the program if necessary.

Integrate staff development funds across program areas to provide training to all staff in restructuring and to provide release time to staff to jointly plan and design restructured programs that include special education.

Use special education staff development money to train *all* instructional staff and administrators in restructuring as it includes special education.

**Eligibility Decisions:**

Continue categorical eligibility for special education; however, in order to promote collaboration and greater ownership of the students at the school level, a two-part decision-making process can be used involving regular and special educators. First establish the disability and then establish the need for

involving regular and special educators. First establish the disability and then establish the need for services. Specify which services are to be provided in the regular classroom and which outside it. Regular education and special education teachers should collaborate on supporting more diversity in the regular classroom.

**Programs and Services:**

Let the IEP define specific educational and related services and specify who will be accountable for services and outcomes. The IEP defines the collaboration and integration of staff.

Maintain a range of services and placement options, including some that may be outside of the regular school building.

Encourage flexibility and variation across schools to promote innovation and development of local school programs that meet the community's needs and the needs of individual students.

Establish teacher teams from all instructional programs to develop specific instructional collaboration models and programs within a building. The teams can modify curricula across domains or age ranges with the intent of supporting diversity.

Provide incentives, both fiscal and "psychological," to individual schools that have developed more collaborative programs; use them as models and sources of technical assistance for other schools.

**Procedural Safeguards:**

Develop procedures to ensure that school staffs document compliance with students' IEPs, regardless of where the service is delivered or by whom.

**Outcomes and Accountability:**

Hold all schools accountable for a set of student outcomes. Differentiated outcomes for some students with specific disabilities may be developed, but these should be consistent across the district.

Include educational outcomes for students with disabilities in school report cards. Accountability for student performance within specialized schools, if those exist, rests with that building principal and/or staff. Outcomes for these specialized schools may differ in some areas from those student performance measures used in the regular comprehensive schools, but some outcomes are consistent across all schools in a district.

Consider developing alternative assessment and reporting formats for some few students if they have some separate outcomes. However, one accountability system should be in place and that accountability is at the school level.

**Governance/Program Administration:**

Share restructuring decision making among school principal, staff, faculty, parents, and community. Special education personnel should be involved in the site-based, decision-making process to ensure advocacy and representation for students with different abilities.

Represent and involve parents of students with disabilities on local site-based management committees and similar governance groups. Parental representation is critical and must be assured at the school level.

Determine decision boundaries so that principals know what decisions they should make and what authority is maintained by central office. Local school staffs assume responsibility for learning about and managing program regulations, including the process for obtaining waivers. Schools are not passive recipients of rules and regulations.

## Strategies (cont.)

Specify a clear waiver policy, including procedures and contingencies for waivers; establish review and "quality control" procedures.

Establish an initial centralized review process for individual school plans that includes oversight of special education programs. The process, used to stimulate change, manage compliance, and coordinate personnel or services, is particularly important in larger districts where individual school actions may be less known.

Have central office staff abolish policies, procedures, and regulations that hinder school restructuring; they must also clearly define which procedures and program directives must be consistently applied to students with disabilities.

**Personnel:**

Allocate special education staff to local schools, based on total school enrollment and consideration of any specialized needs of certain students. Allow site-based team flexibility in use of a special education staff and do not attach staff to specific placements (e.g., special class, resource room, etc.).

Create guidelines for identifying staff development needs (i.e., for faculty and all school staff including cafeteria, janitorial, and transportation personnel); provide necessary training to meet the needs of students with disabilities and the staff that serve them.

Urge "informal power holders" within the school to respect and support the needs of students with disabilities in order to implement decisions at the school site for these students.

Have building principals serve as the instructional leaders in the school for all students.

Organize central administration into school improvement centers. Create technical assistance teams comprised of central office staff and administration to assist schools in implementing school-site designed programs.

Train central office staff in providing technical assistance and resources to the decision-making processes, and in defining and developing outcome assessments and curricular modification.

Provide adequate time at the school level for planning and site-based program management. Time is a critical variable and must be incorporated into the initial planning for site-based management.

Provide specific training to parents and other non-educators regarding site-based management and specific skills for decision making.

Plan professional development for all school personnel around common outcomes and a common agenda. Separate professional development activities for different personnel serve to divide the site "team."

## Implications

Leadership for students with disabilities and their specialized programs and services may not be represented at each local school site.

Individual site staff can make decisions regarding programs and instructional arrangements that are more relevant to their students and families.

When the principal becomes the primary source of instructional leadership, central office staff roles change, which may result in tension and confusion among staff.

Site-based decision making is a time-consuming process that requires schedule modification to allow teachers, parents, and others to meet, plan, and develop programs. The process cannot be layered onto an existing traditional school day.

It is difficult to build a school-site team skilled in decision making for special education programs or students with disabilities. Thus, there is a risk of lack of consistency and quality in programs for students with disabilities across a school district.

Parents need assurance that students with disabilities and their special program needs are recognized in schoolwide instructional decision making.

Centralized accountability for special education programs can be lost; parents must negotiate programs at the local school building and a locus of advocacy may be absent.

There is a risk that decisions regarding services or programs for students with disabilities will be based on administrative or staff bias or convenience and not individual student need. Informed special education representation at the school level is critical and requires ample staff development.

Extensive use of waivers from district or state policies may be required to allow schools to make program changes; site restructuring can become bogged down in paperwork.

Freedom to choose curriculum and instructional approaches may clash with state- or district-imposed standards and student outcomes.

This option can increase parent and community involvement and open the school to increased public scrutiny. It can also create a climate for greater parental input and parental decision making, but parents of students with disabilities need to be involved in the process.

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# CHANGE WHAT SCHOOLS TEACH AND HOW THEY TEACH IT

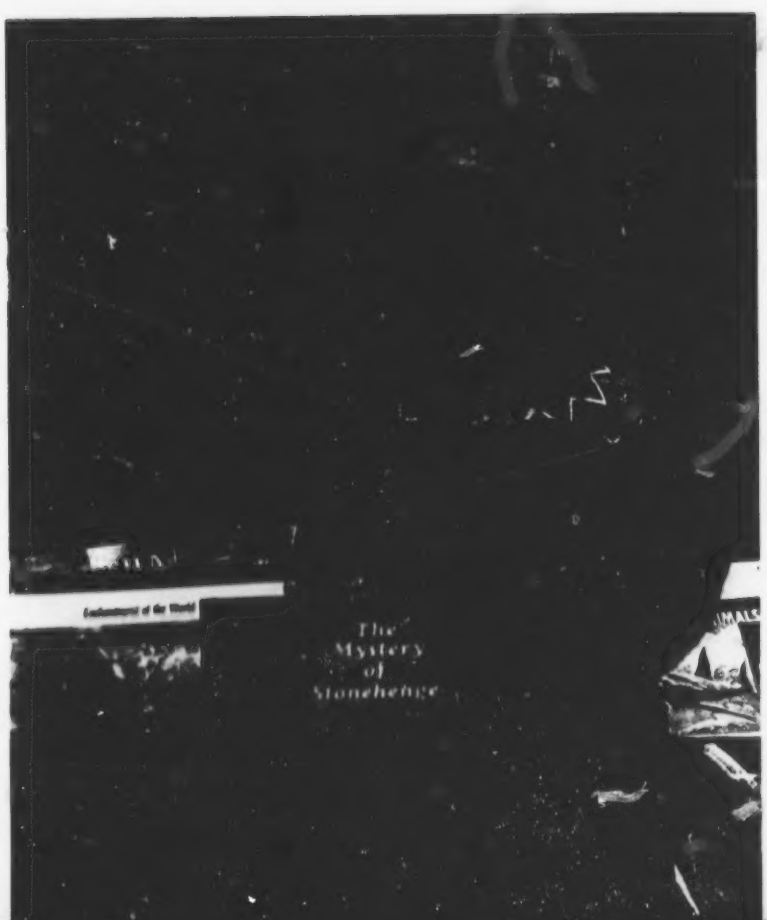
Curriculum and instruction are the foundations of restructuring education. Curriculum decisions define most aspects of education, including not only content and materials, but also schools' goals and assessment strategies. Curriculum decisions are closely tied to, even driven by, the outcomes established by the school district. These in turn, are driven by the mission or vision of education defined by the school or school district. The curricular and instructional choices that a school makes can determine how well a school responds to student diversity and how broadly the school interprets the educational needs of students. Highly focused academic curricula with objectives and attainment targets tied to specific grade levels are not forgiving of students who may learn at a different pace or may learn differently. Inflexible instructional approaches wrongly assume that *all* students can be successful in one approach. Schools or school districts are therefore faced with making decisions regarding how the diverse learners can be best taught, while maintaining high expectations for students within a balanced curriculum.

Options:

- **Unified curriculum; and**
- **Separate or alternative curricula.**

Key Questions:

1. Who will decide what is in the district curriculum - the state, the local district, the school building staff, and/or parents?
2. What are the fundamental outcomes of education as defined by the state or local district or local school and how do they translate into curriculum content?
3. Are the outcomes broadly defined for all students, regardless of educational program?
4. What age ranges will the curriculum address?
5. Is the school or school district committed to long-term and intensive professional development in a new curriculum?

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# Option: Unified Curriculum

The option of a unified curriculum assumes a common core of knowledge that all students must have. Within a unified curricular framework, students with disabilities receive instruction in the broad curricular domains but at levels commensurate with their current functioning and with instructional modifications as needed. The primary need is for breadth and balance -- meaning that the curriculum should be defined not in terms of narrow subject matter but broader areas of knowledge and skill. A unified curriculum accompanies the concept of a unified system and responds to a set of unified outcomes.

A real procedural and philosophical challenge faced by special educators is the legal fact that curricula for students with disabilities should be determined by the needs of individual students and not district policy. However, an overall lack of a curricular framework for students receiving special education instruction results in programs that are unrelated, fragmented, and developed from competing theories and use competing materials and methods. Furthermore, use of numerous highly specialized curricula that may be responsive to individualized student needs creates fragmented education without a broad scope of sequence to learning, and is a barrier to collaboration among special and regular educators.

## Assumptions

All students have more needs in common, in terms of knowledge and skills for productive adult lives, than they have differences.

All students are entitled to a common balanced core of knowledge, skills, and experiences.

Curricula must be defined broadly enough to include not only academics or subject-matter competency but also social and personal development, independent learning, citizenship, and similar domains.

No student is exempted from the curricular framework, yet instructional methods and materials reflect the learning needs and styles of individual students.

## Strategies

Identify curricular domains and the broadest base of knowledge/skills/experiences within each domain that respond to the full range of students' needs and current performance levels.

Develop a curriculum that reflects broad areas of knowledge and experience and is not defined by specific subject matter. If the curriculum is for *all* students, what is taught in the classroom should match agreed-upon common outcomes. For students receiving special education, those outcomes are reflected in the IEP and can go beyond the outcomes determined by the district.

Develop IEPs to reflect student outcomes as well as the curriculum goals.

Define content and process and specify outcomes or attainment targets for each level of the curriculum. The curriculum must be broken down into steps that reach the most basic pre-academic levels. Curriculum objectives must be assessed regularly to ensure that all students are progressing through the curriculum and, in the case of students with disabilities, are meeting IEP goals.

Restrict the choice of content at the classroom level but not method, materials, or scheduling.

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Differentiation for students with disabilities comes in instructional method and materials but not content.

"Map" specific IEP goals onto the curriculum to determine where a student's educational needs can be met. This process of assessing curricular continuity can involve parents, classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, and support service personnel.

Have flexible policies governing textbooks and other curricular materials to allow for differentiated instruction.

Allow students to proceed through the levels of the curriculum at a flexible pace. Students move to the next level only after mastering the content of the current one; however, this progression is not tied to specific grade levels.

Have special educators ensure access to the curriculum for students with disabilities by making instructional modifications and curricular adaptations.

## Implications

This option may be easier to implement in the lower grades than in high school, where there is a greater recognition of the diversity of knowledge/skills (e.g., academic and vocational) and a greater specialization in content areas.

A shared language is created between regular and special educators and provides a common framework for collaboration, team teaching, and integration of students with disabilities into regular education.

The individual autonomy and isolation of special education teachers is reduced, as they now have a greater level of support for shaping the focus of their instruction.

Comprehensive and ongoing staff development and support is required to ensure that *all* teachers understand the curriculum and the implications of instructing students at different levels of the curriculum.

Union contracts and policies governing teaching assignments and certification/qualifications may keep special education teachers from instructing regular education students and regular educators from teaching students with disabilities.

This option could result in an inflexible approach to instruction. For example, the curriculum in language arts could be translated to mean a "whole language" approach; however, such uniform instructional approaches are not successful with all students. Failure to meet a curriculum attainment goal may mean a mismatch of instruction and student, NOT that the content was inappropriate.

A narrowed view of content, particularly at the secondary level, could fail to accommodate the diverse needs of secondary students. For example, vocational education needs to be accommodated in the curriculum.

If the scope and sequence of the curriculum are too narrow or expectations regarding attainment too rigid, the unified curriculum can result in greater referrals of students out of regular education and greater exclusion of students with disabilities into separate classes and separate curricula.

## Option: Separate or Alternative Curricula

This option requires the creation of curricula that offer alternatives distinct from the "regular" curriculum. These separate curricula are designed to meet the unique educational needs of certain students with learning handicaps. The alternative curricular framework can be of two types. There are those separate curricula that are driven by a separate set of goals or outcomes and offer differing content and experiences from those provided to students in regular education. Such separate curricula are typified by life skills or functional living curricula.

Another alternative might be the parallel curricular frameworks that represent systematic modification of the regular curricula. Parallel curricular frameworks are guided by the same learning outcomes that have been identified by the state or local district for all students. However, the scope and sequence of content, as well as pacing, may differ, as may individual "unit" attainment targets and methods for assessing competency.

Separate alternative curricula may be designed for specific groups of students who require different content (e.g., secondary students requiring intensive vocational education and training; students who require training in functional living skills). Parallel curricula are more likely to be designed for secondary students when specialization in academic content areas occurs. Parallel curricula move beyond individual modifications made to accommodate learners within the general curriculum to present a very different scope and sequence of material.

Both types of alternative and parallel curricula should include rigorous assessments of student knowledge and skill attainment.

## Assumptions

Some students require different knowledge or experiences, based on age or assessed ability, and those experiences can best be provided through highly specialized differentiated curricular frameworks.

Different outcomes are matched to different students' educational needs and learning characteristics.

## Strategies

Create options within the broad curricular framework to allow for the use of alternative curricula. Such curricula should be structured so that there are some experiences/content within the alternative curriculum that all targeted students must have, but different standards allow for individualization.

Create or modify learning outcomes that will apply to a sub-group of students and direct the individual curricular frameworks.

Create specific competencies and individual attainment targets that lead toward the differentiated outcomes and create systematic assessment procedures that measure individual attainment.

Ensure that the values, priorities, and diversity of student outcomes, as defined by the community, are incorporated into the alternative curricula as they are for the regular curricula.

Determine who teaches the parallel curricula. Require clear articulation between regular curricula and alternative or equivalent curricula and the relationship between the two.

## Implications

This option allows for more specialized instruction, particularly at the secondary level, for students who are not perceived as able to achieve specific outcomes within the regular curriculum.

Alternative curricula promote pull-out classes or segregation of students with disabilities and perpetuate the separateness of regular and special education.

A "special education" curriculum can provide a common framework across special education teachers and classrooms and provides a type of "quality control" to the education.

Low-achieving students could be "tracked" into lower level curricula. If alternative curricula become identified with special education, then referrals to special education could increase.

A curriculum of "non-knowledge" can develop with a collection of learning tasks, activities, and experiences that are not linked to outcomes nor reflect a comprehensive scope and sequence of learning.

Intensive staff development and supervision are required to ensure that teachers can deliver the curricula.

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# CREATE SUPPORTS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND STAFF RENEWAL

Ultimately, the success of any change in the way regular education and/or special education is defined or designed will depend on the support and capabilities of the staff who must implement the programs. It is people who change systems. Clearly, the task that everyone acknowledges as critical to restructuring is to ensure that all staff learn new skills and new ways of approaching their roles. The importance of professional staff development and support is such that a resource commitment to this endeavor development should precede even the development of a mission statement. All staff, instructors, and administrators must have ongoing support and assistance through the often long, hard task of restructuring. Such intensive development requires human and fiscal resources and a top-level commitment to provide such resources for the long term. The commitment must also extend to providing another critical resource -- time. Such commitments of time and money can often be lost or shortchanged when restructuring focuses on changing goverance structures or determining student outcomes.

As professionals begin to explore more collaborative ways of providing special education within the context of regular education, all educators in the schools need to gain new understandings about students with and without disabilities, as well as how to accept a broader, more communal responsibility for the learning outcomes of those students. Staff development that responds to such broad responsibility needs

responsibility needs to be designed by the individual recipients and should provide long-term support, not episodic topical workshops or seminars. Therefore, only one option for staff development has been suggested:

Option:

- **Staff development in a restructured workplace.**

Key Questions:

1. Have the district administration and the school board made a major commitment to support professional development or will the efforts be secondary in the budget process?
2. What resources, specifically budgets and expertise, are available within the district to support a major staff development effort at the individual building level?
3. Is there expertise available within the school district, at local colleges and universities, other school districts, other professional organizations, or similar institutions to support long-term and intensive school-based assistance?
4. What current policies (e.g. state certification or other inservice credit requirements, union contracts, or use of existing district-wide staff development "days") affect a more flexible design of "personalized" staff development?
5. How can district-level support and technical assistance ensure that each school receives sufficient staff development resources and that each school implements a high-quality staff development program that is truly responsive to staff needs?

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## Option: Staff Development in a Restructured Workplace

This option recognizes that staff development and renewal must occur through a problem-solving and collegial process that involves restructuring the school building. Staff develop new skills and learn new ways of interacting through an ongoing set of activities that include use of "outside" professionals as well as peer coaching and mentoring. The critical areas of knowledge that drive staff development can be determined by the school staff and/or suggested by central administration to meet some program change. For example, staff can be directed to address ways to maximize collaboration among special and regular educators. However, how schools choose to provide such staff development will be determined within the individual schools. Schools can use their own internal expertise but will also rely on district staff development opportunities, as well as those available from local colleges and universities or outside consultants. The key to the option is that the local school staff, and perhaps parents and community members, determine their specific professional development goals and commit to planning the staff development activities for their school.

Despite the need to create a building-based staff development model, there are some options or considerations for the direction of that model and the role of central office. Staff development resources can be given to the local school in a budget allocation, and local school staff can determine both needs as well as resources for staff development. Centralized staff development means that both human and financial resources are available through a central office that assists the local schools in designing or obtaining staff development.

Another dimension of staff development is the individual versus group staff development. Group staff development requires consensus among staff regarding common goals and common needs, while individual staff development recognizes the needs of individuals for professional growth and development. Neither of the above approaches is incompatible with a model of staff development that is based at the local school and uses a wide variety of resources to meet professional development needs. However, some consideration must be given to the relative mix of the above dimensions.

## Assumptions

The restructuring of schools rests on the abilities of the individual school staff to restructure their skills and develop a shared agenda for their schools. Staff development is the key to assisting them in this process.

The best way to ensure high levels of skill attainment as well as effect change in teacher attitude and behavior is through demonstration/practice/feedback that allows teachers to implement new practice or theory in their instructional programs and receive immediate and grounded feedback.

Staff development that is designed and implemented at the school site is most effective because it responds to actual needs and involves all staff, including principals, in developing a common set of skills or knowledge.

The intensity and focus of staff development is fluid and varies by individual school needs; therefore, building-based staff development can respond more quickly to changing demands.

## Strategies

Organize staff development activities around a common agenda or common set of goals, such as increased student performance on specific outcomes. These goals can be set by each school and/or the state or school district.

Plan staff development for the whole school/staff to ensure collegiality and common knowledge. Monitor school staff development plans to assure that the needs of all staff, including "specialists," are met.

Include parents as participants and co-planners in relevant development activities. Educated parents are better able to support school change and interact with the school staff.

Have school and central office staff empower and help teachers to develop their own expertise and share it with others.

Combine staff development funds from various programs and agencies to support training in specific areas. The collective funds can support a common staff development effort within the school.

Provide sufficient opportunity to address staff development needs in the individual schools. Sporadic staff development days do not accomplish this nor do daily schedules that do not provide time for training. Individual school staffs must have the authority and the opportunity to decide what skills they need and how best to attain them.

Have central office facilitate teachers from various school sites in coming together to share successful practice, brainstorm, and solve problems. Such interactions and teacher-led discussions are powerful, relatively low-cost staff development tools. One staff person from each school building can serve on a system-wide coordination team to help plan staff development and share resources across individual schools.

Assure that staff development planning at each school includes specific measurable goals and a means for assessing actual change in behaviors. Accountability for achieving the goals rests with the building principal.

Provide staff development assistance to schools lacking expertise to put together their own high-quality staff development. Providing technical assistance to school staffs relative to the *process* of staff development can be as critical as delivering actual content.

Bring theory and research to the school site and teach it as part of the demonstration/practice/feedback process. This may entail developing long-term arrangements with outside experts such as university personnel.

Use peer-coaching and mentoring procedures to expedite the process of staff development. School staff can be organized into study groups, or several individuals within the school can be designated as staff development coordinators or as mentors. These individuals are released from some teaching duties to receive and provide training to peers.

Use technologies, such as audio-video interactive teleconferencing, in local school districts lacking access to expertise.

## Implications

This option allows for setting system-wide goals that can direct staff development in individual schools. It also determines the goals by which the staff development will be evaluated.

Staff development may require the availability of outside assistance and knowledge, and local colleges and universities may not be available or willing to work in the school over a long term.

The concept of collaboration is enhanced as special and regular educators determine together their collective staff development needs and how they will design their professional experiences.

This option requires time in the school schedule to develop staff development. Principals may tend to look to the quick workshop to fill the available staff development days rather than reschedule the instructional day to provide ongoing time for joint planning and problem-solving.

School districts may not have the resources necessary to support long-term outside assistance even if it is available.

There may be great "unevenness" across schools in the content and quality of staff development, particularly with respect to topics such as accommodating students with disabilities, unless a central goal promotes such training.



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## Policy Options in Action

The following vignettes describe how some schools have responded to restructuring. The vignettes are linked to the policy options presented in this document.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Unified System**

As late as 1987, Seattle Public Schools (Washington) maintained a segregated facility to serve over 300 students with disabilities, the majority with moderate and severe disabilities. The students received a primarily self-contained program that afforded little opportunity for integration with non-disabled peers and appropriate instruction in community-based settings.

As part of the restructuring effort to integrate students with disabilities in their home-school campuses, a number of changes in district policies were made. Initiatives for home-school education involved students with a full range of disabilities. All students were moved from the segregated setting to regular elementary, intermediate, or high school settings. Today, all of the students receive appropriate instruction in community-based settings. Many of them have jobs for pay.

For students with mild disabilities, additional planning resulted in 21 elementary schools developing models to integrate the services from special education, compensatory education, and bilingual education with those of regular education during the 1991-92 school year. This integration was in response to school board policy to establish smaller class sizes and models through integrated programs and services. Funds from the Seattle City Levy were redirected to provide two staff persons to each building to reduce class size and to further integration. In addition, 5 of the 21 schools were selected to be specialized demonstration sites to implement legislation that also called for the establishment of alternative assessment procedures for the identification of students with mild disabilities and the maximization of resources through collaboration between categorical programs. By thinking of special education as a *service*, rather than a *place*, the educational options for students with disabilities increased.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Inclusive or Heterogeneous Schools**

Benefiting from an OSEP-funded Statewide Systems Change grant, Colorado has made a conscious effort to provide inclusionary education opportunities for all students with disabilities, including those with the most severe.

Adams County (Commerce City) has moved toward restructuring with building-based authority across the entire district. The district has developed a comprehensive "Constitution and Blueprint for Continued Success" that addresses all aspects of restructuring and is driven by a set of outcomes for which schools are held accountable. Since Commerce City's mission statement promises "equal and open access to academic learning opportunities" for students with disabilities, students receiving special education services are included in the district's outcomes that include functional, community skills, as well as academic mastery. All principals are held personally accountable for the outcomes of their school plans. Special educators serve as consultants and facilitators to regular educators in order to include all students in the regular classrooms.

As the Weld County (Greeley) Schools began restructuring efforts in 1988, the Board of Education established a "full inclusion" policy for the district. The county's mission statement calls for educating all students together. As a result, students entering the system, including those with severe disabilities, are now placed in their neighborhood school. Students receiving special education services are measured by mastery of IEP goals. Special educators serve as consultants and facilitators; they also provide individualized instruction and community-based instruction.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Separate Program Identity with a Continuum of Placements**

The 25th largest school district in the country, Prince George's County Public Schools (Maryland) is a suburban district with a predominant minority student population. It provides services to students with disabilities from birth through age 21 using a comprehensive system of non-categorical programs based on level of intensity of program need. Because of the size of the



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district, programs requiring a high level of intensity (most notably for students with severe disabilities) are clustered geographically, and the central office determines the location of these programs. Students' school assignments are based on their specific program needs and the location of their neighborhood school.

In keeping with the county's school site management philosophy and practice, schools are given latitude in determining the method and location of instructional delivery within the school site, as long as it is in compliance with the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). As a result, a range of placement arrangements is provided in the neighborhood schools. Site-based management teams may choose to deliver special education services throughout the school on a fully inclusionary basis or through separate classes. Special education centers also participate in site-based management in a modified fashion, and teams have discretion over portions of the budget and instructional delivery.

The continuum of services and placements offered includes private placements for many of the county's students with behavioral disorders. As a result of funding incentives provided by the state funding formula that covers the majority of the excess placement costs, the county has found private placements to be most cost effective.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Unified Outcomes and Accountability**

The State of Maine's Common Core of Learning has resulted in a vastly different approach to education and expectations for student outcomes. Recognizing the need for youth to be prepared for the 21st century, the state introduced the Common Core in 1991. The Core is an integrated, non-disciplinary organization of student outcomes of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are categorized into the areas of personal and global stewardship, communication, reasoning and problem solving, and the human record. Contained within the core are the outcomes that address traditional domains of academics, creative and performing arts, and vocational education.

The student outcome goals contained within the Common Core were developed to be appropriate for and include *all* students. The recognition of students with diverse learning needs, including those who are at risk and those with disabilities, is prominent in the introduction to the Core. As a result, the IEP team plays an integral role in identifying those Core elements that are most appropriate for an individual student, and in identifying strategies to maximize the opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in activities that will lead to attainment of the outcomes.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Unified Outcomes and Accountability**

Kentucky's Education Reform Act of 1990 provides a set of outcomes for schools to which all students are entitled and that are defined in terms that all students can be expected to attain. The objectives specifically require schools to develop their students' abilities to: use basic communication and math skills for purposes and situations they will encounter throughout their lives; apply core concepts and principles from mathematics, sciences, arts, humanities, social studies, and practical living studies to situations; become self-sufficient individuals and responsible members of a family, work group, or community; demonstrate effective community services; think and solve problems in school situations and in a variety of situations they will encounter in life; and connect and integrate experiences and new knowledge from all subject matter fields with what they have previously learned and build on past learning experiences to acquire new information through various media sources.

The Kentucky State Board of Education plans to develop and implement a state-wide, primarily performance-based assessment program no later than the 1995 school year. The system is based on measurable outcomes defined by the state's Council on School Performance Standards.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Differentiated Outcomes and Accountability**

The Michigan Department of Education has implemented an accountability strategy for determining special education program effectiveness. Called *Outcome Indicators for Special Education*, student outcomes have been established for each of the 12 disability categories recognized in Michigan. The outcome indicators are assessed using Performance Checklists and Exit Performance Assessments that are administered on a voluntary basis to a random sampling of students throughout the state. The Assessments are done at four benchmark points in a student's academic career. Comparisons are made between expected and actual student performance and are then used to identify program areas in need of improvement. To maximize the usefulness of the indicators and allow as many students as possible to participate, Performance Checklists are based upon teacher judgments or recollections of student behavior rather than actual student performance. The Exit Performance Assessment is a performance-based measure of student achievement of outcomes administered near the time the student exits from school. Results of both assessments are used for individual student evaluation as well as program evaluation.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Centralized Administration of Programs and Services for Students with Disabilities**

Dade County (Florida) schools are well known for their implementation efforts in educational restructuring, particularly in the area of site-based management and shared decision making. Special education has been a part of this process and employs a blend of administrative control in which the central office retains responsibility for certain administration and program structures, while other responsibilities are delegated to regional offices and school sites. The central office maintains responsibility for the education of all students with disabilities, develops procedural safeguards, ensures compliance with federal and state regulations, and provides technical assistance and inservice. Staffing specialists from the regional offices participate in the individual school multidisciplinary team process for determining eligibility. Staffing specialists also provide assistance and consultation to the school site. The central office maintains considerable budgetary responsibility, especially in the area of entitlement funds. Regional offices determine school site locations and the number of teacher allocations per location in the region. The regional office also provides assistance to principals and school sites on an as-needed basis.

Schools have the responsibility for developing IEPs. Principals serve as local education agency (LEA) representatives, supervise teachers, and are responsible for ensuring appropriate delivery of the IEP. Principals have some degree of flexibility in determining how special education operates within the school, including the degree of inclusion and method of instructional delivery. Dismissal of students from special education, if not involving a change in school site, does not require central office involvement. Dismissals that require a change in placement require staffing specialist involvement.

**OPTION IN ACTION: School-Based Management of Programs for Students with Disabilities**

Prince William County Public Schools (Virginia) is nationally recognized for its progressive movement in school-based management, which extends into the delivery of special education services. Individual school sites have been given full responsibility for determining eligibility of students for special education programs. Central office provides a written procedural manual and inservice to familiarize the schools with legal requirements and offers support upon request. Each school determines the eligibility and level of service needed by the student; mediation is provided by the central office. Central office identifies the appropriate school when the base school determines that the student needs a special class not available at the school site.

The majority of special education services provided in the schools are administered through school-based management. However, itinerant programs (e.g., services for students with visual and hearing impairments and students requiring related services) are administered by the central office. Principals develop their annual budgets based on projected numbers of students and a predetermined rate, set by the central administration, for each student disability category and level of service. While held accountable to state regulations, principals and decision-making teams are encouraged to use special education dollars in creative ways to maximize special education services.

**OPTION IN ACTION: School-Based Management of Programs for Students with Disabilities**

O'Farrell Community School in San Diego (California), a magnet school for 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, is a Center for Advancement of Academic Studies. The school adheres to an interdisciplinary, product-driven curriculum that relates individual student's needs to identified themes and essential learning outcomes. As a result, the instructional domains of English, Science, Math, and Social Studies are taught in a coordinated fashion within a particular theme (e.g., Rites of Passage). O'Farrell students include those with disabilities who, as valued members of the student body, receive their instruction in the regular classroom without permanent pull-out of any student.

The governance of the school is controlled by a unique organization of staff and students. For the 1991-92 school year, the school was divided into four "houses" with three "families" of 112 students in each house. Each house has teachers, including special educators, who, in addition to their teaching duties, may function as a house leader, a curriculum leader, or the guidance leader. The students and educators within each house make all education program-planning decisions required to meet specific student goals. These teams also establish the budget to accomplish the goals. Decisions affecting the school as a whole are made by a Community Council composed of the Chief Educational Officer (i.e., principal), leadership from the families of each house (including a special educator), students, and parents.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Unified Curriculum**

Educators and community leaders in London, Ontario (Canada) believe strongly that *all* students should master certain essential skills throughout their 12 to 14 years of schooling. To that end, an integrated curriculum was developed for all students. It is based on six essential learnings or strands called Essential Learnings: Communication, Numeracy, Technology, Personal and Social Values, Thinking Skills, and Independent Learning. Each strand may be addressed across a number of subjects or disciplines. For example, numeracy concepts may be taught in Mathematics, as well as in Language Arts, Social Studies, and Technological Education. Attainment Targets and Statements of Achievement provide a framework through which the specific learnings will be accomplished by certain age levels.

Decisions about curriculum implementation strategies rest with the individual school. Principals and instructional staff are free to design the instructional approaches most appropriate for individual students in their schools. While significant flexibility is provided schools for delivering the instruction, each school is held accountable for their students' progression toward a uniform set of student outcomes based on the Essential Learnings.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Separate or Alternative Curricula**

Pittsburgh Public Schools (Pennsylvania) recognize the need for alternative approaches to education in order for all students to succeed. To that end, Pittsburgh offers the regular curriculum, a differentiated curriculum, and a functional life skills curriculum.

For students with mild disabilities, there is a direct relationship between all content areas in the special education and regular education systems (i.e., all students are exposed to the same scope and sequence of subject matter in basic science, social science, and language arts). In the two model restructured elementary schools opening in the fall of 1992, special education programs will be provided within a basic education environment, using a basic education curricula.

Many students with moderate disabilities receive instruction based on a differentiated curriculum. This curricular option assumes there are common learning outcomes that are valued by the school and community for *all* students. These include functional communication skills, mobility, vocational skills, and academic skills, where appropriate. Alternative instructional classrooms, materials, methods, and experiences may be necessary to achieve these learning outcomes. A differentiated curriculum allows for highly specialized instruction but guided by the broader learning outcomes, thereby facilitating re-entry to regular classroom instruction.

Students with severe disabilities receive a functional curriculum that addresses the acquisition of basic academic skills, communication, and life skills.

**OPTION IN ACTION: Staff Development in a Restructured Workplace**

Restructuring of schools to support the inclusion of students with disabilities is occurring throughout Vermont. New legislation (Act 230) has led to the merger of special and regular education resources to serve all students in general education classrooms. The Act supports families and professionals in developing instructional support systems to meet the needs of all students. "Wearing new hats" and "taking on new roles" are themes heard throughout Vermont schools. Educators, staff, students, and their families are forming collaborative relationships and sharing responsibility for educational change. These developments are due in part to long-term planning, training, and technical assistance provided by local school districts, the State Department of Education, and the College of Education and Social Services at the University of Vermont. Jointly sponsored programs provide a combination of classroom instruction and technical assistance for families, paraprofessionals, teachers, administrators, and school board members. Training focuses upon instructional strategies, educators serving as service coordinators, roles and activities of instructional support teams, and adjusting to "wearing new hats." Families, educators, and administrators agree that one of the biggest services provided through the University programs is the presence of University faculty in the schools during the school day on a regular basis, thus allowing school staff consistent access to training and technical assistance that meet the needs of their students. This collaboration helps both school and University staff identify future staff development topics and activities.



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